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BEHIND BOTH LINES

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE WILL TO LOVE
THE DAWN'S DELAY
BLONDEL
MATTHEW ARNOLD
AFTER PURITANISM, 1850–1900
THE RETURN OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
INVECTIVE AND ABUSE: *an anthology*

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BEHIND BOTH LINES

By

HUGH KINGSMILL

MORLEY & MITCHELL KENNERLEY JR.
22 ESSEX STREET, LONDON, W.C.2
1930

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To KENNETH HARE

The poet of *Estrildis* and *Glaucus*

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BEHIND BOTH LINES

CHAPTER I

LATE in November, 1916, a large draft of officers left the Naval Division camp at Blandford for France, to replace the heavy casualties in the recent fighting at Beaumont Hamel. I was alone in the mess-room on the morning we left, when the door suddenly opened, and another junior officer, Fraser, also on draft, rushed in, halted abruptly, and began to sing:

" I'm going away,
But before I go to-day
I've got something to say to you,
I've got something to say.
I'm going away,
But before I go to-day
I've got something to say to you
I've got something to say.
I'm going away . . ."

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Fraser's eyes were wild and fixed. Apart from his sex and lack of beauty, he resembled Ophelia in the mad scene.

He vanished as suddenly as he had appeared, and when I next saw him, in the train on the way to London, he was quite composed, except for his uneasy brown eyes.

The other officers in the carriage were quieter and more thoughtful than usual, and when one of them raised the question of personal immortality, the rest joined in without any embarrassment, and all agreed that there must be a future life. Without this belief, one of them said, it would be difficult to face active service, and the others nodded.

By the next day, when we crossed to Boulogne, the solemn oppressive emotion of this journey had vanished, or rather had been driven underground; but no one seemed to feel that exhilaration which I had secretly believed would well up spontaneously in those going on active service. For reasons more complex than the simple aversion from physical violence, naturally assumed by others to

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be the sole possible explanation for remaining at home, I had not previously left England, though I had joined up as a private in August, 1914, and had received my commission three months later. The possibility that I might never see the Front had been weighing on me, especially of late, until I had got to the state of wincing at pictures in the illustrated dailies of happy Tommies "somewhere in France." Now the barrier between me and the Front had vanished, and with it the expectation of enjoyment on active service.

Before the war, a rough crossing in mid-winter was endured as an irrelevant discomfort on the way to Switzerland, but now it seemed relevant enough as a prelude to further and worse discomforts; and I was glad to forget my depression over a drink with a short, stout civilian, who was going East on war propaganda, "to tell the tale," as he put it. He was a friendly little man, and no doubt won many wavering Orientals to a belief in the purity of the Allied cause, and I was sorry when I read in the papers, some

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years after the war, that he had been sentenced to a long term of penal servitude for financial misrepresentations.

From Boulogne we went to an Infantry Base Depot at Calais, where we lived in tents, just outside the town. As the mind, when life is shaken out of the rut, perceives portents and omens everywhere, it seemed to me significant that I should have returned to Calais, the place where I had first mixed in the outer world, having been sent, at the age of seven, to a local school for a few weeks, with my brother. The other pupils were all French, and used to gather round us in the playground, and howl in anti-Albion frenzy. And now I had returned for the express purpose of liberating this churlish folk from an alien menace! I could not conceal from myself, that the rhythm of things demanded that my last taste of the outer world should be here where my first had been.

Another portent was a meeting with an officer, Oliver, by name, whom I had known at Harrow. He was in the cricket eleven, and two or three years my senior,

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and when I say I knew him at Harrow I mean that he used to kick me whenever he saw me. The warmth with which he now greeted me was flattering; he remembered me, it appeared, as a sporting kid, whom it was rather a pleasure than a duty to kick. Over a dinner in the Terminus buffet, he recalled, with a touch of sentiment, how he had once thrown me to earth and how philosophically I had received a hundred lines from my form-master for my filthy appearance.

There was something of the twilight, of a reconciliation at the door of the tomb, in this dinner, eaten in the station-buffet through which I had passed so often on my way to Switzerland, thankful to have left my present host and other plagues at a safe distance behind me.

It would be a mistake, both for my credit's sake, and in the less important interests of truth, to pretend that my mood during these days at Calais was unintermittently crepuscular. The illusion of old age, life reaching its term, and happiness passed for ever, weighed

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on me chiefly in solitude, or marching in the December twilight back to camp, past sparse fields merging into sand dunes.

On the thirteenth of the month, we were ordered to be ready at 7 p.m. that day, to join our battalions. At eight-thirty we marched into Calais station, about sixty officers, and some hundreds of men. The first twenty officers in the column of march were accommodated in second-class carriages; the remainder, myself among them, were provided with cattle-trucks. A couple of oil-stoves, the property of Benjamin and Southwood, two officers in the company to which I was attached, warmed the cattle-truck; and hay was found in sufficient quantities to protect us from the floor. We started on our journey before midnight. At five-thirty or so the train brought up with a jolt, and Southwood, with another public-spirited officer, arose and descended from the cattle-truck to find out where we were, returning presently with the news that we were in Calais station, though on another siding from the previous evening.

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It looked as if it would take us some time to join our battalions at this rate, so, with Southwood as the directing brain, we made ourselves as comfortable as possible, laying in a supply of coal and improvising a brazier for cooking out of two biscuit-tins.

After breakfast, we left the truck to stretch our legs. The train at once set off, and it was with some difficulty that we got into it again.

We trundled along hour after hour. Lunch was far behind us, and we were about to prepare tea, when the train stopped. The truck was warm by this time, and a pleasant inertia steeped us all, or steeped, at any rate, the finer spirits, one of whom, seeing the O.C. draft on the platform, inquired, with the mild humour of a lotus-eater, whether we had arrived at our destination. Yes, we had, we were told, and if we weren't out of the truck in a minute, we'd have to walk back from the next station.

After we had fallen out of the truck and picked ourselves and our belongings up, we learnt that we had a twelve miles' march

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to our billets. Southwood and Benjamin immediately pressed their oil-stoves on a suspicious French porter, not caring to carry them so long a distance. We were then told that we were to entrain again, and that our billets would be only two and a half miles from the station we were now bound for. On disembarking once more, we were informed that our valises had been left behind. It was raining hard, the two and a half miles of our latest information lengthened into six, and when we reached the village where our battalion was resting we found that our arrival had only just been notified from Calais. We had, therefore, to find our own billets for that night.

Our valises turned up the following evening, soaked through, as the French railway officials had left them out in the rain. This may not have been a deliberate act of war, but certainly, by the close of 1916, some doubt seemed to exist in many French minds as to who was the enemy. At Calais, a Frenchman told me it was generally known that England meant, on the conclusion of

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peace, to retain Calais, Boulogne, and probably the whole of the Pas de Calais and Somme districts. It was, indeed, for this purpose that she had sent her armies over. He smiled, a sad, courteous smile, which said—"A practical race, you English, who require value for cash outlay."

The next day, at a small château, the hunting headquarters of some Frenchman, we reported to Sterndale Bennett, the acting C.O. of the Drake Battalion, a very young man, whose thin face, curved nose, and repressed intensity recalled the youthful Bonaparte, but without Bonaparte's arrogance. Sterndale Bennett told me that the Brigadier, General Phillips, wished to see me, and that he would accompany me to the general on horseback. Knowing nothing of horsemanship, I was more anxious about the journey than about what awaited me at the journey's end. The other officers collected at the door of the château, "to see me off," as I suggested, but we moved away at a walking pace, so I managed to remain on. Once out of

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sight of the château, Sterndale Bennett put his horse to the trot, and I bumped along at his side.

The general, a harassed-looking man frowned peevishly at me, and asked me what I meant by writing to my brother in Switzerland, to inform him that the Naval Division had recently distinguished itself in action at Beaumont-Hamel. At this distance of time, I cannot recollect exactly how I couched my reply, but as it is well known that no subaltern ever permitted a senior officer to take liberties with him, I suppose I answered broadly as follows: "General Phillips, the news contained in my letter appeared in *The Times*, in a fuller and more accurate form, some weeks ago. *The Times* reaches Germany, via Holland, within forty-eight hours of its publication. But even if, by some extraordinary chance, this particular issue of *The Times* has not yet reached Germany, I take it that the Germans do not require to be informed from a neutral country of an action in which they themselves were involved. I say nothing about your implication that

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my brother, incapacitated by a broken leg from serving his King, is a likely person to sell information to the enemy. In this crisis of our country's destiny, neither my personal feelings nor yours are worth a moment's thought. But what I do say is that it seems to me a very extraordinary thing that you should fritter away your time, my time, and the time of my battalion commander, on a matter which it would be grossly complacent to stigmatize as frivolous. I wish you good-morning. Come, Sterndale Bennett."

The village in which our battalion was resting was in the neighbourhood of Rue, near the mouth of the Somme. The recent rains had converted the country into a marsh, and, as Pound, my usual companion, and I waded through a field towards the farmhouse where we were billeted, we heard Fraser, who was squelching behind us, mutter to himself: "*La Belle France!* Yes, I know." When we reached the farm, Southwood broke it to Fraser that he had secured accommodation in the farm for Pound and me,

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but, most unfortunately, not for Fraser, nor for Fegan, also an officer in our company. So Fraser and Fegan, after speaking their minds, left us for another address, where their hostess insisted on hanging her washing over the bed they were compelled to share. This practice gave Fraser the earache and brought out Fegan's hereditary rheumatism.

We, however, were quite comfortable, and as the men were resting, there was little work to do. The company commander being on leave, I was O.C. for the time being. It is difficult to praise oneself, so the other day I looked up Pound, and asked for his memories of my achievements in this responsible position. He said: "You used to give your orders for the day from your bed. They were taken by the sergeant-major, leaning through the window. On one occasion, when you were supposed to inspect the guard, you didn't like the idea of going through the mud, so you sent for the guard, and inspected them from the doorway, in slippers, with a newspaper under your arm. I don't remember anything

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else, except that when a Tommy was once singing:

> The roses round the door
> Make me love mother more,

you asked him to explain why the roses round the door should make him care more for his mother, and the poor chap didn't know what to say."

My own clearest memory of this billet is the Christmas dinner, and even this memory is somewhat confused, though I recall the farmer's wife bringing in a live chicken and asking if it would do for us, while the poor bird struggled to escape from her grasp, obviously feeling that we were about to do for it. And later, long after dinner, one of the company N.C.O.'s remains in my memory. He had looked in on us, all formalities dissolved in good cheer, and stayed with us some time speaking of his past services and future feats with the natural candour of a heroic soul.

"V.C. or W.C. for me in nex' show," he kept on saying. "V.C. or W.C.——"

"Why W.C.?" I queried.

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"V.C., sir, or W.C. for me," he insisted.

"Death or glory, in other words?"

"V.C. or W.C.," he repeated, with Scotch tenacity.

After Christmas the Battalion moved to Le Crotoy, a coast resort at the mouth of the Somme. The old woman who owned the house which was chosen as the headquarters of our company, had been embittered by the conduct of French troops, previously quartered on her, and when we arrived she sat mute and dogged in the kitchen, her hands folded on her lap. "She proved to be very difficult when our officers got into the house," Southwood records.* "She flatly refused hot water, etc., and would do nothing to help until Lunn, in that marvellous way of his, talked the old lady round." Lunn, it is agreeable to explain, is the author of this book, Kingsmill being his pen-name.

The Battalion had finished its rest by this time, and it was no longer possible

* Southwood used to write a detailed account of our experiences to his future wife. After the war he gave me a copy of this record, to which I am much indebted for refreshing my memories of this period.

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to direct operations from one's bed. On most days there was Battalion parade and drill, and two or three times we marched sixteen or eighteen miles for a Brigade practice, that is, for an attack carried out with as close an approximation to the real thing as was consistent with the absence of an enemy and the presence of a general.

As acting Company commander, I was provided, against my will and better judgment, with a horse. Sterndale Bennett had returned to England for a few weeks, and our new C.O. was a cavalry colonel. My horse, fortunately a very phlegmatic animal, had this disadvantage, that when he had resolved to be recalcitrant he was far too insensitive to bother about my hauling at his bit. There was a violent downpour at the first parade presided over by the new C.O. The rain drove slantingly into our eyes as we faced the colonel, and after a moment's reflection my horse began to pivot slowly round. I struggled to keep him head on, but uselessly, and he ceased to rotate only when he and I were facing my company. The

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colonel did not refer to this obscene incident.

He was a tall, handsome man, with very charming manners. "It is a perpetual marvel to me," he said, at a meeting of his company commanders, "how you fellows carry all those details in your heads. Now there's one very important point we have not yet tackled. I want you to put your heads together and discover the best cook in the battalion, for my mess. And for your own messes I do urge you to get the very best available man."

"I think, sir," said one of the company commanders, "that I have just the man for you. But he's been getting into trouble lately, I'm afraid, sir."

"Indeed? Wine or women?"

"Women, sir."

"Ah, well, of those two amiable weaknesses, women is undoubtedly the less dangerous, in a cook. I will take him. But now about your own messes. Do let me again urge you to treat this matter seriously. I was talking to a charming woman the other day, and she told me

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how she pitied the poor men in this war. 'My dear lady,' I said, 'You are making the very greatest mistake. The Tommy is perfectly accustomed to discomfort. It is part of the routine of his civilian occupation, whatever that may be. Now the officer, on the other hand——' And so, gentlemen, let me once more urge you not to be careless in your selection of a cook."

Two or three weeks earlier, Sterndale Bennett had given us a short address, the account of which in Southwood's record I quote as a counterpoise to the cavalry colonel's urbane heterodoxy. "One evening, about this time, all the officers were summoned to headquarters to attend a lecture by the acting C.O. He was only about twenty-four years old I afterwards heard, much to my surprise, for he had the manner of a much older man, probably due to his experiences in the war. He has since received the D.S.O. . . . The room was packed with officers and was dimly lit by candles. The C.O. sat at a table, resting his head on his hand, and talked about the spirit of the Battalion. Summed up, it amounted to this—that the

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officers of the Naval Division thought of themselves last and their men first. He said it was a spirit we should acquire in time."

Shortly before we left Le Crotoy, an officer of the Naval Division was shot, after a trial by a court-martial. His crime was neither desertion, nor treachery, nor any action obviously tending to the advantage of the enemy or to losses among our own troops. He was accused of nothing more serious than wandering about under shell fire in a bad state of nerves, instead of taking some working-party to a point indicated by another subaltern. This officer was not yet twenty-one, he had joined up as a volunteer at nineteen, and there was nothing of any kind, military or personal, against him, except this break-down of nerves. From a letter, published in the Press, which he wrote to his mother on the eve of his death, he seems to have been even younger than his years, and devoid both by temperament and ignorance of life of any resentment against his sentence, or any realisation that the mysterious powers which had condemned

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him could be actuated by any but the purest motives.

On the evening after his execution, half-a-dozen officers in his battalion, which was stationed a few miles away, came into Le Crotoy to look for the subaltern, whose evidence, spontaneously offered, had led to ——'s death. But the subaltern had just gone on leave.

Uncertain whether it was a common practice of G.H.Q. to order the execution of subalterns, we said little about ——'s death, feeling ourselves in the presence of a menace which might become actual if we allowed ourselves to be worried by it. Fraser alone found unequivocal speech necessary, and, stalking sombrely into the mess, muttered: "If they're going to treat us like this, I don't know that it wouldn't be better to end it all, here and now."

On the 13th of January, we left Le Crotoy for the front, and I think it was on the previous evening that we had a company dinner, a jovial affair in which the only serious note was struck by

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Fraser, who, instead of committing suicide, had prepared an after-dinner speech of some length. To the perplexity of his platoon, with whom he was sitting and whom he especially addressed, he spoke of his uncle, who had been in the army, and now he, his uncle's nephew, was in the army, too, and if his platoon stood by him, by Heaven he'd stand by them. The speech was deeply felt and passionately delivered, as was natural from someone who, in one way or another, had been connected with the theatre all his life, but his men were perplexed. I still see their wondering faces.

I myself was entirely at ease about the men, having just heard that the only man in the company who was a likely person to shoot an officer in the back had expressed himself as satisfied with me. Two or three days previously I had been prisoner's friend, in this man's behalf, at a court-martial, where he had been charged with using injurious language to, and assaulting, a woman in a shop. My plea that he was very drunk at the time

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was accepted by the court, after a glance at his face, and sentence on him was suspended until he had had a chance of gaining a remission by good work in the fighting line. He was, in fact, bound over to keep the peace until he should have killed a few Germans.

When the court-martial was over, I learnt that he had been transferred to my company because he had threatened another company commander that he would shoot him as soon as they were in action together. I was, therefore, glad to hear that my few words in defence of his character had been appreciated.

A sharp frost set in before we began our march to the front, and in the mornings the white undulating plains, with here and there a lonely haystack, glittered to the horizon's edge; but the slow advance of battalion after battalion was sombre, even in the sunshine, and as the short days darkened the sense of necessity, constant beneath our flickering surface emotions, swelled in all hearts, while the tired dogged Tommies sang: "We're here

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because we're here because we're here because we're here. . . ."

I see from Southwood's record that one of our billets on this march was kept by a hospitable farmer's wife, who exerted herself to make us as comfortable as possible; and as I seem to be implying, whenever the French are mentioned, that they were unfriendly, I transcribe this note of Southwood's before giving my only vivid memory of a billet on this march. It was at Candas, as far as I remember, and the elderly couple to whom we and our batmen were assigned refused to let us use the stove, and said that our batman could not sleep there. Courtesy having failed, my mind rapidly kindled with images of rape, arson, and all the other specialities associated by our Press with the German armies, and I painted so lurid a picture of the fate from which we were saving this ungrateful couple that the woman began to weep softly, and the man hastened to put the stove at our disposal, and to withdraw his interdict on our batmen.

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Pound's memory of this incident is that I drew a revolver and threatened to shoot the old woman unless she roasted me a chicken. Pressed to withdraw this charge, he complied, but suggested that the woman wept rather at my French than at what I imagined I was saying in that language.

Meanwhile, the hour was approaching when my horse and I were to part from one another. Riding him at a walking pace, at the head of my company, I felt that I had mastered him. But on two occasions the odd streak of temperament in his sluggish nature betrayed me unexpectedly. On the first occasion, the company ahead of ours had increased the usual gap by a hundred yards or so. Apparently my horse didn't like this. It made him feel exposed, so he covered the gap at a trot, in spite of my protests, and for the next two miles or so, until the usual halt, I rode at the rear of A company instead of at the head of B.

On the other occasion, a fellow-officer, to whom I had lent my horse during most of the day, returned it to me with

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reluctance. It was during a halt, the battalion was resting on either side of the road. As I mounted the horse, he gave it a smart blow on the haunches, and it dashed down the icy road at full gallop, to the great satisfaction of the troops, but they were disappointed at my not coming off.

The last stage of our journey was in motor lorries. We were now just behind the front, and as we approached Albert in the dirty grey of the winter afternoon, the shell-struck Virgin on the Town Hall, which hung head downwards secured by ropes, seemed like a figure of despair bewailing our entrance into these dolorous regions. Even Pound, the most equable of us, dismounted from his lorry, during a halt, and came along to ask me in a disturbed tone what I thought of her.

This first sight of the hanging Virgin gave me a feeling of horror which I did not experience again during my short time at the front. The battered landscape was infinitely dreary, but it was, after all, the work of rational beings, and

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lacked, therefore, the inhuman horror felt in lonely places, and especially among mountains.

B company was bound for reserve trenches at Thiepval, where I had been instructed to report to the Town Major, who would furnish me with the required dug-outs.

Our march took us at first through a wood, filled with Robinson Crusoe huts, inhabited by units engaged in supply and transport. I noticed a few niggers at work, and remembered them later when I saw a cartoon in a German paper, representing an English prisoner-of-war, sitting in surly despair surrounded by negroes, Indians, and Japs. The text ran: "What inhuman barbarity! To shut me up with my Allies!"

From the wood we emerged into country knocked out of shape by the severe fighting of the previous year. The wind made a curious dry, thin sound as it whistled through the shattered trees.

On arriving at Thiepval, which no longer existed, I explored a mile or so of trenches in search of the Town Major

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and learnt at last that he had left with the outgoing Division. It was now dark, the men were hungry, and it was many degrees below freezing.

I set off again and discovered a Blandford friend, Mellor, in a comfortable dug-out, with his machine-gun colleagues. He sympathised with the difficulty of my situation, and accompanied me up from his dug-out to the entrance, from which we surveyed the dark landscape, lit from time to time by flashes of shell-fire. Agreeing with me that there was a certain grandeur about the landscape when it was no longer visible, and wondering what luck I would have in my search for accommodation, he went down again into his dug-out.

Visiting the headquarters of the nearest Brigade, I was received with distaste by the brigadier, a fine, burly man, who frowned at me with a preoccupied air. Escaping before he was sufficiently aware of me to have me shot and dumped in the nearest shell-hole, I returned to the company, with some vague instructions from a staff-captain.

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How far I followed these instructions I no longer remember. My impression is that, with Southwood, Pound, Fegan, and the N.C.O.'s, I dragged the company desperately hither and thither, until I had finally disposed of the lot, but how it was managed I cannot now recollect. At last, Southwood, Pound, Fegan and myself, with our stout-hearted batmen, found a dug-out for our own use. The officers flung themselves on to the bunks, and the batmen, like loyal gnomes, set about preparing tea for their human masters.

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CHAPTER II

A CHARM, not altogether the illusive child of memory and distance, hangs over the eight days or so we spent in these reserve trenches at Thiepval. B company was for the time being ignored by Brigade H.Q. We were therefore free from that eternal badgering about, which is the chief of the many curses of military life. It was, in fact, only after two days of enquiry that I could find out what we were expected to be working at. On the second day, after a long walk with Fegan, in search of Brigade H.Q., I came upon my former friend, General Phillips, seated in the front parlour of a house in some distant village. Staff officers, battalion commanders, and seconds in command surrounded him. A flash of recognition passed between us—"the fellow who's selling information to

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the Hun" his eye said. "I'll get him yet."

Tunnelling, I believe, though where or why I forget, was the task finally discovered for our company, and we went back with this information. As we returned in the darkness, over the wrecked countryside, a shell exploded near us. "We must get out of this," said Fegan, hastily. Fegan was only twenty, very tall and thin, with quivering brown eyes. He had outgrown his strength, and looked too frail for active service. But he was as resilient as he was high-strung, and emerged from the war as a full (naval) lieutenant and with an M.C. Coming of an army family, he supported his spirits, and aroused our opposition, by an imitation, too impressive to be exact, of a general's manner, brusque, incisive, and overbearing. When we had had as much of this as we could stand, he would collapse and be for a time as appealing and wistful as a misunderstood child.

"Yes, but where can we get to?" I asked, in answer to his exclamation. The general re-emerged in Fegan. His eyes

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flashed, and he strode by my side with a firm commanding gait.

It was pleasant to return to our dug-out, which two days' work by our batmen, supervised by Southwood and Pound, had made quite comfortable. It had been a German dug-out, and the bunks had wire netting stretched over the wooden boards. One of the two entrances had been blown in by a shell, and the batmen tried to reopen this entrance, so as to improve the ventilation, but as one or more German corpses were imbedded in the debris they did not care to go on with the job. There was some advantage in this imperfect ventilation. Later, in a fully-ventilated dug-out, our fire drew a terrific draught down one entrance, through the dug-out, and up the other entrance. It was, indeed, only when the fire had died out that we enjoyed any warmth at all, a discovery in physics of which I claimed the credit.

In the evenings Southwood used to write his long narrative letters to his fiancée. To pass the time, we asked him to read them out. He had by now

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reached a point where he wished to draw the portraits of his fellow-subalterns. We bade him disregard our feelings, and serve truth alone. Fegan was his first subject. When Southwood, in his reading, came to the words—"He is just over six feet high, as thin as he is long (resembles a hair pin, in fact)", Fegan insisted that the phrase must be modified or expanded, so as to qualify the false impression given. "What about adding 'he gives promise of being a really handsome man when he fills out'?" Southwood asked. "That'll do," said Fegan. "In his schoolboy mood," Southwood continued, "he is lovable, but his Brigadier manner requires all the patience one can command." Fegan shrugged his shoulders, and looked forbearing, but became restless again when Southwood read out his sketch of Pound: "He is the most unselfish man in the mess, and the embodiment of commonsense. He has all the wisdom of a much older man—he is only twenty—but never intrudes his views. He is the sort of chap one would like with one in a crisis because

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he is not likely to get 'wind up' unnecessarily."

Fegan grunted over this. He seemed to want a little shade in the picture, so as to equal it as a work of art with his own portrait. The best I could do for him was these lines, which Pound brought to my recollection again the other day:

> "My name is Master Harold Pound.
> In martial matters I am sound
> And fury—signifying nil.
> I live with 'Erb and pore old Bill.
> My meal is bully beef and spuds,
> I shudder at the thuds of duds.
> Lor! how I do admire Lunn,
> I tell you he's a proper one,
> And doesn't give a damn for Hun."

The realist will protest: "All this chaff is very delightful or repulsive, according to one's taste, but what did you four really think of each other?"

I should say that each of us genuinely liked all the others, in varying degrees, and that active service has this one great virtue of increasing affection where there is already liking.

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Also, Southwood's portraits, in spite of our censorship, suggested weak points, where they existed. I had been over-indulging in some milk tablets at this time, and they gave me a sore throat, which on two successive mornings made me extremely irritable and trying to the others. This and similar lapses can be divined in Southwood's account of me, the first sentence of which raised a really agonised protest from Fegan—"he has more individuality perhaps than any man in the Battalion." After this opening, Southwood continued: "He has a very sympathetic nature, but at times, through thoughtlessness, gives the impression of being selfish . . . he is one of those people whom nature never intended to live in a confined space. . . . If he does not knock over the candle, he upsets the table and scatters the food all over the floor. Failing either of these little acts he kicks the brazier over, or looks for a stud he has not lost, carefully holding a dripping candle over your tunic all the time. He has other little ways such as dropping jam on the petrol

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can which we use for sitting on, or snatching away the only light just as one is negotiating a difficult corner, in the desire to find his fountain pen which he is holding all the time in his left hand. . . ."

Southwood himself fell little short of Pound as a dug-out companion. Considerably older than I was, and much older than the other two, his habits were already settled when the war broke out, so the task of readjusting them produced occasional gusts of petulance, which blew themselves out immediately.

His special aversion was rats, and when he lay down at night he used to envelop his head in his trench coat. We could hear the rats all night, chuckling, wheezing, and screeching; and occasionally they would peep out at us, fat and well-furred from the corpses they fed on. Macdonald, my batman, a cheerful and usually imperturbable Scot, told me one morning, with a grieved disgust, that he had woken up in the night with a warm soft pillow under his cheek. "It was a r-rat," he said,

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watching me closely, to see how I would bear up against this unexpected conclusion.

Two of us used to walk down the valley each day to buy additional food for our mess, at a canteen which some artillery officers had opened. A few shells would burst over the valley in the course of our walk, but otherwise all was calm, and when the sun shone on the frosty landscape, and on the smooth waters of the Ancre, ruffled here and there by waterfowl, the desolation became beautiful for a few moments.

This interlude of still life on active service soon drew to a close. On our last evening Fraser rejoined us. He had been visiting the front line with the O.C. of our company, who had returned for a day or two, and had now gone again. Fraser descended into our dug-out as we were about to begin supper. His entry was dramatic, as of the last survivor in some sensational play, who brings to a beleagured garrison the dreadful news that the rescue force has been annihilated by Bedouins. Leaning up against a

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bunk, he stared down at us with unseeing eyes, shook his head, and groaned. This was disquieting. We speculated in silence about the experiences he must have passed through to open this speechless gulf between himself and his old companions-in-arms. As he had clearly not washed for some days I asked my batman to prepare a basin of warm water. This, after some persuasion, he used, thus regaining the power to eat, but of what he had seen and endured we could not win him to speak. The next day he was indisposed and unable to accompany us to the front line.

On the following morning we marched to a village called Engelbelmer to refit for an attack. Near Engelbelmer, I think the next afternoon, Pound and I, as we were walking along a road, disturbed three or four officers who were creeping after some birds, their orderlies acting as beaters. They made feverish gestures at us, and one of them remonstrated, but to what effect I don't know, being ignorant of game shooting, and therefore unaware how far our presence

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on the road interfered with their sport.

Even the war can hardly have furnished any sadder spectacle, in the sub-human way, than these foolish vexed faces, disturbed in their pursuit of a few small feathered creatures across the vast cemetery of the Somme country.

The attack, in which our battalion supported two others, was on the Beaucourt front. "It was planned to take eight minutes," Douglas Jerrold writes in his history of the Royal Naval Division, "and was carried through in no more than fifty hours' continuous fighting."

We marched up to the front line a few days before the attack, passing through the wood we had gone through on our way to the reserve trenches, and leaving Thiepval on our right, towards which I looked with a feeling of homesickness.

As we emerged from the wood, a frightful explosion from a gun concealed within a few yards of us made us jump. "Really!" Southwood snapped, "Boche shelling's

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bad enough, without our own side doing this sort of thing."

Darkness had fallen as we crossed a ravine, and rounded Suicide Corner, on the road up to Beaucourt and Beaumont-Hamel. The ground on either side, though no more battered than at Thiepval, seemed inexpressibly more menacing and gloomy.

At Suicide Corner we met troops descending from Beaucourt, and one of them, as he brushed past, muttered: "For God's sake, let me get by." His panic led me to expect that at any moment half our battalion would be blotted out, for I did not know that shell-fire does relatively little damage, except to the nerves.

The dreamy oppression of the march up vanished when we reached our dug-out, a hut in a quarry, fairly well sheltered from the Germans who were on the slopes across the Ancre valley. There was no regular trench system at this part of the line. On the sector allocated to our company, outposts were placed in shell-holes, and the others manned a shallow

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trench two hundred yards or so behind the outposts. Being in charge of the company, I visited Suvla trench, as it was called, and the outposts, in the evening and at dawn, and spent the rest of the time in the dug-out. The frost was intense, and I felt remorseful when I called on Pound and Southwood in their shell-holes. One evening, Pound and I walked to and fro under a marvellous moon, until the soft thuds of rifle bullets in the earth, a sound new to us, began to impinge on our consciousness. We realised that we were presenting good targets to the enemy, and though, after the noise of bursting shells, these thuds seemed trivial, Pound returned to his hole, and I to the quarry. A few hours later, as I stood in the quarry, I got a curious pantomime effect in the half-light of dawn from the shells flashing and exploding in the valley, like baffled witches crashing to earth in their rage, and flying asunder.

On the evening of February 3rd, the Hood battalion came up to take over from us, for the attack which was to begin at

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11 p.m. The importance of this attack had been impressed on us subalterns in Brigade orders, which concluded, "The Army Corps Commander himself takes the greatest interest in this operation."

Before the arrival of the Hood, Suvla trench was shelled more heavily than usual. The Germans used to shell it each evening at about eight, and I found that the effect on the mind of casual shelling differed greatly from shelling which one knew to be directed against a given objective, occupied by oneself. Suvla trench was about three feet in depth, with holes in the reverse side, accommodating a certain number of the men. To stand in this shallow ditch watching the shells dropping on the gentle slope directly in front, and occasionally reaching the ditch on either side of one, was a curious experience, not very alarming to a new-comer whose nerves were still fresh, but imposing a perceptible strain.

Walking along the trench, I came on a Tommy who had crept with two or three

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others into a hole. He was moaning, and the blood was oozing through his puttee. The stretcher-bearers had been sent for. This being the first casualty I had seen, it affected me very much. Huddled in the frozen hole with his mates, he seemed more like a harmless wounded animal than a man.

Our company, after it had been relieved by the attacking force, marched back to the ravine, and was employed in working parties under Southwood and Pound during the rest of the night. Meanwhile, the attack was taking place, and presently a number of German prisoners arrived in the ravine, where they were served with rum or tea to refresh them after their exhausting evening.

From the ravine up to the front line, the road was now being heavily shelled by the Germans, and the bombardment continued throughout the following day. The noise, which never relaxed, might be compared to a train load of exasperated hyenas, rushing through an endless tunnel on the Tube.

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One effect of this noise was illustrated in a little scene in the ravine, early the next morning. A staff-captain, from Brigade H.Q., lost his temper with Southwood, and raged at him as if the trivial matter in dispute were some until then unimagined treachery. The shattered ravine, the ferocity of the captain, Southwood's fatigued stupor, and all about us the unceasing scream and whistling and explosion of shells, remain in my memory as vivid as at the moment.

The ill-feeling between staff and regimental officers, from which the rage of the overstrained captain must have partly derived, was due to the greater risks which the latter ran.* The best brains in the army were to be found, as the war advanced, among the younger staff officers, the majority of whom had been civilians at the outbreak of war; and it was somewhat ludicrous to hear infantry subalterns speak of appointments to the staff with a contempt which suggested

* Since writing this paragraph, I have been reminded by a friend that staff officers, belonging to the regular army, disliked the temporary officer for using the war as a pretext to get into uniform, thus placing himself technically on a social equality with officers of the regular army.

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that they were being perpetually and vainly pressed to accept such appointments. But their closer approach to death sanctioned this attitude, even in the minds of the victims of their contempt.

During the morning I took the company up the road to Beaucourt trench. As this road was the main or only route for supplies and reinforcements to the attacking troops, it was being shelled unintermittently, yet I did not see any casualties myself, though I was on the road several times during the day. On one of these occasions, an officer I knew came bowling along with a broad grin on his face. He was a promoted petty officer, a very tough soldier, who had been one of the last to embark when Gallipoli was evacuated. "I've got a blighty," he sang out to me, pointing to his arm, and strode on down the road, apparently feeling that his wound conferred on him complete immunity from shell-fire.

I lunched at battalion H.Q., in Beaucourt trench, and was recommended by the C.O., Major Freeland, who had taken over from the cavalry colonel, to

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have a little shut-eye, as our company would be going into action in a few hours. The phrase—"a little shut-eye," and the considerate tone in which it was said stuck in my mind. When I lay down I realised that I was feeling the strain of the shelling.

At about 8 p.m. our company fell in on the road. The attacking battalions, the Hood and Hawke, had lost touch with each other, and B company was to proceed to the left extremity of the Hood, and from there join up with the right flank of the Hawke.

An active and imperious figure, strongly contrasted with the tired troops who had been working hard with little rest during the last twenty-four hours, sprang up on the road, and suffered me to be rapidly presented to him by our adjutant, Beak. We at once set off. My companion was Arthur Asquith, at that time a Lt. Commander, temporarily on the staff. He had accompanied the Hood battalion in their attack, had, Douglas Jerrold narrates, got them back to their correct alignment before 8 a.m., and had now returned to bring our company up to

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regain touch with the Hawke. In my short experience of the front, I never saw anyone, officer, N.C.O. or man, except Arthur Asquith and one young Tommy, who did not look like an illustration of the refrain, "We're here because we're here because we're here because we're here."

But Asquith embodied free-will. He was there because he liked being there.

Our progress over the torn ground was slow. The men kept on falling in and out of shell holes, and Asquith's impatience increased. He seemed to feel as a champion sprinter would, who should find himself, on turning out to lower the world's record for the hundred yards, unaccountably compelled to do the course leading a tortoise on a string.

At last we reached one of the German trenches that had been captured in the attack. A number of dead Germans had been stood up against the side, most of them with sacks thrown over their heads. But one of them was uncovered, and his

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face in the bright moonlight expressed intense agony and astonishment mingled. The blood had suffused in the veins below his right eye. However quickly he had died, his last moments must have been so painful as to amaze him with a sensation he had never even imagined. A little further on, face downwards on a dark slope, with one leg drawn up, lay a German, who looked like a life-size marionette, dropped behind the scenes by a stage-hand.

These sights were unreal, but the sense of reality came back when we reached the left flank of the Hood. B company halted beside a trench manned by troops who looked disconsolate, and tired of the incessant noise in which they were enveloped. A Brigade runner suddenly appeared, and handed Asquith a message. About fifty yards to our left, the message ran, a big shell hole was held by Germans with a machine-gun. This strong point must be taken at once. I got the company out in four lines, and asked Asquith whether as company commander I should lead the attack or supervise it. "Supervise

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it," he said. My spirits, which had been fairly high during the march up, were now at their lowest, and I was relieved that my private wishes should coincide with the military requirements of the situation. Remembering the sergeant who had placed before himself the alternatives of V.C. or W.C. in the next show, I put him in charge of the first line, another sergeant of similar temper in charge of the second line, and Pound and Southwood with the third and fourth lines, reserving for myself a position on the flank of the second line. The sergeants protested against this arrangement. Its impropriety became clear to me, and, placing Pound and Southwood with the first two lines, I sent the sergeants to the rear. The men having drawn the pins from their Mills bombs, we advanced on the strong point.

Pound strode forward with his usual deliberate tread. I watched him anxiously. He seemed unnaturally tall in the moonlight, and so isolated that the garrison of the shell-hole could hardly fail to bring him down.

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The enemy continued to reserve their ammunition, and we continued to advance. When we reached the strong point it was untenanted. General Phillips had been misinformed.

My depression vanished. I now felt equal to anything. The company straggled out into column of route, and we went forward, Asquith and I at the head. The men, holding Mills bombs with the pins out, so that if anyone tripped he was likely to blow at any rate himself to pieces, became fretful. Once, the whole company had to halt while an overwrought Tommy hurled his bomb into the night. The rest, however, seemed to prefer sticking to their bombs, as a precautionary measure, should they meet any Germans.

Presently, we came to a dug-out, outside which lay a few dead English soldiers. One of these soldiers, a young man, was lying on his back, his arms spread out and his eyes closed. The moon illumined his unmoving face, which was more beautiful than any living face could be. For some moments I forgot myself and

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my surroundings. As I looked down at him, I did not think of him as a dead man, or of myself as exposed to the risks which had proved mortal to him.

My next recollection is of drawing ahead of the company, with Asquith and three Tommies. We were being fired at from our left, by Germans who were between us and our own lines. Presently Asquith remarked that he was wounded, and must return. I sent one of the Tommies back with him. Of the other two, one vanished, I don't know when or why. The remaining Tommy was a young boy, whose eyes were gleaming with excitement. We potted alternately, with his rifle, at the black figures bobbing about in the moonlight, moving on between shots. After a few minutes, I saw a group of men a hundred yards or so away. "These may be ours," I said to my companion. "Let's advance with our hands up, so that they won't shoot."

As we approached in this attitude, someone shouted "*Gefangen*." I called to my companion to run, they were

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Germans; and we made off. They opened fire, and killed him, before we had gone ten yards. He was just behind me and gave a short quick gasp. If his death was, as I think, instantaneous, the last few minutes of his life were unalloyed in excitement and enjoyment. His eager face, as I first noticed it, when the others had left us, has remained always clear in my memory.

The Germans chased me for two or three hundred yards, and then gave it up. When their figures were no longer visible, lurching over the churned-up earth, I stood still to regain my breath. I must now, I thought, be so near the Hawke that it would be better to find them first, and then go back to my company. After walking for two or three minutes, I saw some figures in a large crater, and called out to them. One of them shouted back: "We are A Company." The accent was German, and I replied: "*Es schient, dass sie deutsch sind.*" They laughed good-naturedly, and I paused, a few yards from them, on the edge of a shell-hole. The abnormal

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excitement, in which I had been since the advance on the reputed strong point, vanished, leaving me in a matter-of-fact state of mind. But the run, in field boots and Burberry, had warmed me, and I felt a strong reluctance to giving myself up. The fascination of active service, so keenly felt until I left England, suddenly revived. I turned the matter over in my mind. As I was an easy mark, and as they had been amused by my answering in German, I knew they would not shoot as long as I stood still. They were probably waiting for me to resume the talk. After perhaps half a minute, I muttered, "No, I'm damned if I will," and rushed away. Crouching figures were stalking up to the left rear of the crater. The Hawke at last, I thought, and ran towards them. A few yards from them, I saw their helmets, the German pickel-haube. At the same moment they saw me. I ran another four or five paces, and tripped up. When I got to my feet, they had surrounded me, and I handed them my revolver.

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Such were the circumstances leading up to my capture, as I remember them. My father visited Arthur Asquith in hospital, in London, on February 13th, and dictated the following summary of Asquith's account of this night. The military situation, so obscure to me, is, in spite of some inaccuracies inevitable in reporting someone else, made clear in this narrative, and the final sentence, giving Pound's opinion as to my fate, serves to balance the favourable references to myself, natural in a talk with the father of a missing son.

"We are very hopeful to-night that Hugh is alive and a prisoner in the hands of the Germans. On receiving a letter from Southwood, who was a fellow officer with Hugh, and who was with him in this fight, to say that Arthur Asquith was with him nearly all the time and was now wounded in a London hospital, I found out where he was, and went to see him. He at once got a map and described to me exactly what had happened. On Sunday night, the Hawke and the Hood battalions were ordered to take a certain

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German trench, which was bombarded for half an hour. His battalion succeeded in taking their half of the trench, which was the half close to Grandcourt. They also took a dug-out, where they left twenty men. The Hood battalion failed to take their trench, but got hold of the left extremity of it. On Monday night, Hugh, who was commanding the Drake men—I think it was only a company—was ordered to go up and reinforce the Hood men from the point where they ended. He joined Arthur Asquith at the dug-out, where they found eight corpses out of the twenty men. The other twelve had probably been taken prisoners by the Germans during the day. Between them and the English lines were a number of German machine-gun operators, who were annoying them all the time, as they worked along the line. When they had got rather more than half-way towards the Hawke battalion, jumping from shell hole to shell hole under the fire of the machine guns, Arthur Asquith was wounded in the arm, and said to Hugh: 'Well, I must leave you now. You

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must lead these men on, and I must go back."

"Then Hugh went back to Southwood, as far as I can make out, and told Southwood to hurry the men up, and another officer called Pound was at the rear of the company, hurrying them on as best he could. Hugh then went ahead, and was never seen again. He wanted to make a direct attack on the machine guns, but as Arthur Asquith had had experience in Gallipoli, and had seen a good deal of fighting, having been wounded previously, he did not think this desirable or likely to lead to success. He said that Hugh was very keen, and probably got ahead of his men, and was cut off by the Germans. He said that no shells were falling on this line. The shells were passing right over their heads, and falling half-way between them and the English line, so he thought there was hardly a chance that Hugh could have been struck by a shell. . . . That night, the whole of the line was taken, and the Germans, finding this out, evacuated Grandcourt, they also evacuated a great deal of

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territory around, so that all the country where Hugh might have been lying was cleared of Germans, and was thoroughly searched. Sub-Lieut. Pound has written to us to say that he is convinced Hugh is a prisoner."

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CHAPTER III

FOUR or five of my captors took me along to a dug-out where they reported my capture to an irascible-looking person, I think an N.C.O. I could not follow what was being said, and so was surprised when I suddenly found myself being hustled up the dug-out ladder, while loud protests rose from below. The dispute was probably about who should take me to Brigade head-quarters, my captors and the dug-out occupants both claiming the job, which meant being out of the front line for some hours. Once more in the open, my companions, who had retorted the abuse thrown up at them with equal violence, became calm again. They were shortish men, five foot four to six, from Saxony, and bore out fully the war-time reputation for amiability of the Saxons.

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It pleased them to learn that I had spent some months in Dresden, and they laughed when I quoted a verse from Heine, appropriate to their situation:

"O Deutschland, meine ferne Liebe,
Gedenk' ich deiner, wein' ich fast.
Das muntre Frankreich scheint mir trübe,
Das leichte Volk wird mir zur Last."

"Oh Germany, my distant love,
I could weep, when I think of thee,
This gay France seems gloomy to me.
This light folk is become a burden."

Presently, as we were crossing a field, my companions shouted at a dark mass just ahead of us. There was a terrific explosion, followed by a stream of execrations from my guard, to which a voice answered from the gloom in the same sense. In front of the voice a field-gun took shape, and I inferred that my Saxons had called to its manipulator not to fire till we had passed. A black-hearted little man, I pictured him, sitting in this lonely field with his gun, night after night, year in, year out, hating his fellow-men, and happy only when he made them jump.

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We reached a road, and the noise of battle became gradually fainter. It was a glorious night, and as I looked up at it, I suddenly realised that the war was over for me, the curtain of death rolled up, and life stretched out before me once more.

The Brigade H.Q. was at a village called Achiet-le-petit. My guard took me down the two flights of a very deep dug-out, and ushered me into a comfortable little room, where a bald, elderly and stout brigadier lay in bed, between white sheets. He blinked up at me, and, being informed that I spoke German, asked in a mournful voice if we intended to go on attacking in this style. A careful, but possibly incomplete analysis, conducted immediately afterwards, did not reveal any apprehension in my mind, or desire to conciliate. I wished merely to compose his spirits, so that he might resume his sleep with an easier heart. So, instead of assuring him that our attacks could not properly be said to have even started as yet, I smiled, and made a deprecating gesture, implying:

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"My dear sir, you cannot, you *must* not imagine that we could be so inhumane as to do anything that could really cause you serious inconvenience."

With a loud sigh of relief he rolled over on his side, and, clutching a handful of cigarettes from a box on a table by his bed, held them out to me, at the same time saying to his guard: "Treat him as an officer."

As I went up to the first floor of the dug-out, I thought of General Phillips, another and equally meritorious member of the tortured genus brigadier; and I hoped that he was still managing to sustain the Army Corps Commander's interest in the operation.

My guard gave me some food, and turned a Tommy out of his bunk. It was 5 a.m., and I was glad to lie down. The next morning I set off at 9.30, with a private, and we trudged, in amiable but forgotten talk, over the frozen countryside. Straggling villages, churches showing through little woods, an occasional haystack, the perpetual movement of troops, all was the same, except that,

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petrol being scarce, there was more horse and less motor transport than on our side. We called on some Uhlans, for our midday halt, cheery fellows, one of whom said, referring to Roumania's recent entry into the battlefield and slightly more recent exit: "An urchin like that! (*solch' ein kleiner Bengel*). We soon cuffed his head for him. But you English . . . that takes time!" Not in each individual instance, I thought, and bowed to the compliment with a modesty I hoped would appear assumed.

After lunch, my guard hailed a cart, in which we jogged along to the 50th Reserve Division H.Q., where we parted company. On the way, I asked him what he thought of the Kaiser, and he sighed "Ah, he has many troubles to bear."

A brusque staff officer interviewed me at the divisional headquarters. I gave him my name and regiment, but declined to answer any other questions; so he took me into a small room, where, fixing me with his eye, he poured forth information about the recent movements of my brigade, its battalions, and its companies.

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I followed his conversation as intelligently as my ignorance allowed. His eye became more and more hostile; he ceased abruptly and swung out of the room.

The last part of that day's journey was in a train. On arriving at Cambrai, I was taken along to a house, probably a public building, with a wide stone staircase on which I passed some miserable-looking privates of the Drake battalion. A sergeant showed me into a large, bare room, left me, and locked the door. It was intensely cold, and I crossed the room to look at my bedding, which consisted of two filthy mattresses. Untying one mattress, I burrowed into the straw, pulled the other mattress over me, and was soon asleep.

The next morning, the sergeant, who had mistaken me the previous night for a Tommy, discovered I was an officer. His manner became much more amiable, and he took me along to some other officer prisoners, four in number, who had been captured a day or two previously, and were waiting to be sent into Germany.

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The five of us shared the same room. Lieutenant Schrumm, a German staff officer, interviewed us in turn. He was very amiable, and seemed to be compiling material for an exhaustive report on the mentality of captured British officers. In his talk with me, he complained of Lord Northcliffe's stigmatization of the Germans as barbarians. "We are not barbarians, are we?" he asked appealingly. The same question was put to me, twenty-one months later, when I was leaving Germany, by an old woman at Cologne, a lavatory attendant. It seemed to me illogical of Lord Northcliffe to call a nation barbarian, which weighed his judgments so anxiously, unless he considered himself a barbarian, too. This was unlikely, and I, therefore, assured both Lieutenant Schrumm and the lavatory attendant, that Lord Northcliffe could not really mean it.

As I was returning to my quarters, a middle-aged German soldier approached me, and asked whether he had been correctly informed that my name was Lunn. Ah, good! in that case, might

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he hope that after the war I would use my influence with my firm, that famous travel organisation, to send him clients? He had a comfortable and inexpensive hotel in Tyrol, and wished to open it for winter sports. He would esteem it the highest honour if he might furnish me with his name and address. I promised him my support, and went on my way, cheered by this reminder of the past.

We remained in Cambrai till the twelfth of February, about a week. It was a gloomy period. One of our number had been wounded, and left us almost immediately to go to hospital. The other three, Adams, Whitney, and Hillam were, like myself, unwounded. Above the mantelpiece in our room a former occupant had written his name and the names of the officers with him, under the heading, "The Roll of Dishonour." None of us referred to this breach of good taste, so it was clear that each of us felt its sting, and was suffering under the double stigma of being out of the war, and of having got out of it undamaged. The

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first virtue which a child understands is physical courage. This early impression, overlaid in ordinary life, had been revived by the war, which reinforced it with the equally strong impulse to take one's share of a common danger or disaster. From these two impulses or instincts, debased and perverted though they often were by vanity, competitiveness, and other symptoms of original sin, derived the attraction of the front line for the normal man, who was fascinated and repelled by active service in about equal degree.

In surrendering unwounded, we had done violence to both these instincts, and our tempers accordingly became morose. Each of us may have felt that he, personally, had gone some way beyond what could reasonably be required of him to escape capture, but, the ideal being always irrational, the sense of guilt remained, and as it was not dissipated in open talk, converted itself into ill humour. Eating was our only interest. The food provided was unappetising, imitation jam and coffee, black bread,

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vegetable soup, and sometimes salt fish; but our German orderly brought us, in addition, biscuits, herrings, and *hönig-kuchen* (a kind of gingerbread), so at anyrate we could satisfy our hunger.

Our house must have been on the edge of the town, for I remember one day, between our quarters and Lieutenant Schrumm's close by, looking over the dreary white plains and hearing the faint rumbling of the guns. I did not really desire to be back there, nor think with regret of the long march from the coast, and denounce its anti-climax. I was, at bottom, glad that I had escaped to do the work I wished to do; but, at the same time, I was very sorry to be separated from Pound and Southwood, and to be deprived of that chance of military distinction which everyone, however unmartial, aspired after. There were my men, too. How they would fail to miss me!

At the baths, to which we were marched one day, my humiliatingly short experience of active service was impressed on

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me by a German sergeant, who seemed unable to grasp the abstract conception of a stay at the front that covered less than, at an absolute minimum, one year. After wrestling with the idea for about half a minute, he made motions with his hands, as though to shoo it away; and, to purge his mind, began to speak of himself. He had been in the war since 1914, he had marched through Belgium, and he insisted that Germany must keep Belgium, as she had taken it with so much outpouring of German blood, including his own; an indecent argument, which no one with a sense for politics will read without disgust.

On the twelfth of February, Adams, Whitney, Hillam and myself, accompanied by an elderly gentle lieutenant and a toothless young private, fresh from his schooling, and full of shapeless erudition, left Cambrai for Karlsruhe, by way of Valenciennes, Charlesville, and Baden. We travelled third-class, but the carriages were well warmed. At this date, prisoners were no longer a novelty, and we were hardly looked at in station waiting-

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rooms or on platforms. Once, a soldier paused and made some rude remark. I replied in German, and we were hard at it when the elderly lieutenant hurried up and reprimanded the soldier very sharply.

The next morning, as we were approaching Baden, the Black Forest came into sight. Fresh-fallen snow covered the hills and weighed down the branches of the firs. The sun shone, and the air was keen—a moment of ecstasy, which might have been shared by my companions had I concealed my enthusiasm. A few hours later, the four of us were shut up in a small room in the Europäischer Hof, a Karlsruhe hotel. The panes of our room were frosted over, so we had nothing to look at but each other, and a pack of cards. A remark of mine: "I do hope they'll give us *sauerkraut*, it's lovely," was taken up by Adams, who repeated it from time to time during our two days in this room. Adams, whom I got to like very much later, had been an Irish Rugby International. He was reserved and undemonstrative, smiled

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reassuringly once a week, and had prematurely grey hair. My *sauerkraut* remark attracted to itself all his repressed ill-humour. The epithet "lovely" appeared more nauseating with each repetition, and the repetitions were fairly frequent, as food was our only topic. "They're sure to give us *sauerkraut* . . . it's lovely," Adams would mutter from his bed. "Don't worry, boys. We'll have some *sauerkraut* soon, it's lovely." "When we get to the camp, there'll be some lovely *sauerkraut*."

On the afternoon of the fifteenth, we were liberated from our confinement, and marched to the camp, which I was not to leave till the twenty-fourth of April in the following year.

The offiziergefangenenlager, or officers' prisoners-of-war-camp, was situated in a park in the middle of the town. A bombing raid by an Allied squadron having some months previously killed over a hundred women and children, who were present at an entertainment in this park, the authorities had, with the indifferent logic usual on these occa-

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sions, decided that the park would be a salutary place to keep prisoners-of-war in.

The camp covered about two and a half acres, at a rough guess. At one end were two parallel rows of chestnut trees, separated by a grass plot, where the donkey who brought our parcels from the station used to graze. Over the rest of the enclosure were scattered blocks of wooden huts, and the whole was surrounded by wooden palings and a barbed-wire barricade.

When I returned to England after the Armistice, I offended certain persons by my inability to recollect any tortures inflicted on me during my captivity. I had not been suspended by my thumbs, nor left out all night up to my neck in icy water, nor overrun by rats in a subterranean cell, nor impaled on a sharp stake for refusing to salute the German flag. But neither, at the opposite extreme imagined by another type, had my life been one long round of pleasures. A friend of mine at Karlsruhe was urged in a letter he received from an aunt, "to

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look up B——at Heidelberg. I believe it's within easy reach of Karlsruhe." The kind of existence this lady apparently pictured for us, sleigh-drives and ski-ing tours in the winter, tennis, yachting, and a round of historical towns in the more clement months, was also outside our experience.

The first few weeks at Karlsruhe formed the only markedly uncomfortable period of my captivity. As the camp had been just opened, a few days before we arrived, there were no food parcels from England for the older inhabitants to share with new comers. The French officers, however, were already receiving parcels. We had, therefore, nothing except tinned shrimps in jelly and a few other dubious articles from the canteen to supplement our two meals daily, at twelve and at six. At the midday meal we received our ration of brown bread for the day, about equal to three ordinary slices, a plate of soup, a couple of potatoes, a few scraps of meat or fish; and the evening meal was much the same, on a still smaller scale.

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Roll-call, in a wooden hall later used for concerts, was at 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. Otherwise, the authorities left us entirely to ourselves. Shortly before midday, the English contingent in the camp, about twenty at this time, might be seen, and doubtless was seen by the luckier French contingent, heading for the dinner-room, where our portions of bread were heaped together on a table. It was not our practice to take the first piece to hand. Each officer handled and examined as many pieces as he could get at, in the hope of finding one a shade bulkier than the others. We then returned to our huts and left our bread there. At lunch we extracted the potatoes and bore them, too, to our rooms, eating the balance of the meal on the spot. There were seldom any potatoes in the evening, so we could carry nothing away from that meal. Between eight and nine, we prepared fish balls from our potatoes and the tinned fish supplied by the canteen, and with these and as much bread as our self-control during the day had spared we blunted our pangs before

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getting into bed. All lights were extinguished at eleven.

Out of humour with ourselves for being prisoners, and always hungry, we got on one another's nerves. There were seven in our room at first, my three Cambrai companions, a Canadian called Black, and Victor Bull, observer and pilot respectively in the same aeroplane, and Warburton, who had been wounded and had only just come out of hospital, after a couple of months. On February 25th a Merchant Service boy of eighteen or nineteen, Prest by name, joined us.

Victor Bull, a stoutish man of twenty-eight or so, with a toothbrush moustache and a short, quick consequential walk, was troublesome at this time. Later, I got to like him, and after the war we had several amusing meetings in Switzerland. But during the period of food shortage he was in a bad humour, which he did not improve by blunting his hunger with the chemically compounded wine supplied at the canteen.

It was Black, his Canadian observer, as Victor Bull divulged one evening in his

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cups, who had soured Bull against me. Black mistrusted me as a highbrow. Each morning I used to translate the bulletins from the front, in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, for him, and he would take down the translation and pin it up in the dining-room for the information of the English contingent. The fact that I knew a little German no doubt aggravated my offence in having a taste for reading. Who was I, anyway? And to show me what Canada could do, he took me aside one day and informed me that the most perfect line in English poetry was Wordsworth's:

"And never lifted up a single stone."

The stress on the second syllable, sustained throughout the line, was, he said, a unique effect. He intoned again:

"And nĕver lĭfted ŭp a sĭngle stŏne."

It was, indeed, a remarkable achievement, I agreed; yet he continued to dislike me.

It is always unpleasant to be regarded as a highbrow, and in this instance it

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was especially exasperating, since the three books, my perusal of which in quick succession had aroused Black's suspicions, were *The Bars of Iron*, by Ethel M. Dell; *A Girl of the Limberlost*, by Gene Stratton Porter; and *A Fair Impostor*, by Charles Garvice.

Black was not openly hostile, but Bull's more exuberant and somewhat truculent nature turned to brawling, and for some days he made himself rather a nuisance in our room. At last, one evening, he and I got entangled in a clumsy half-hearted scrap. He had drunk too much and I had eaten too little for this tussle to merit description. In the course of it we lurched against Warburton's bed. Warburton was not yet recovered from his wounds. Immediately, an immense form surged forward, Bull was snatched up in Adams' arms, carried down the room, and flung on his bed, where he was to be heard for some time muttering reproaches against "that old wolf, Adams."

This act of Adams', on March 9, three weeks after our arrival, cleared the air.

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During the rest of my stay in this room, the atmosphere was unintermittently agreeable. Later, I believe, Bull was occasionally difficult again, but in a more subdued style.

During these three weeks only one parcel arrived at the camp for an English officer. It was for Warburton, and contained bacon and Bath Oliver biscuits. Warburton divided the contents among the seven of us. The delight of tasting bacon again will be easily appreciated, but so poor was our food, that even the Bath Oliver biscuits were marvellous to the palate.

Next door to us was a room of eight French subalterns. They were already receiving biscuits, of a kind we received later from Geneva, and through their door, when open, we could see these biscuits lying about in piles. They were rectangular and deep, and the method of preparing them was to pierce a hole, and let water flow in, and then heat over a stove. This treatment expanded the biscuit into a soft and appetising little loaf.

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Outside their room was a basin where they used to turn the tap on to their biscuits. One day, one of these Frenchmen dropped his biscuit into the basin, picked it up, and threw it into the square.

Prest, who had been watching the Frenchman from our room, darted into the square, and a few minutes later was enjoying the only biscuit which any member of our room ever received from our next-door neighbours.

At the lowest point of my depression, I wondered one day, as I was walking round the enclosure, whether food would ever arrive from outside, except spasmodically and at long intervals. I could not see what interest the Germans had in our continuing to exist—

> "Thou must not kill, but need'st not strive
> Officiously to keep alive."

summed up, I supposed, their view of their obligation to us. Forgetting that each side held hostages for the good behaviour of the other, I pictured my-

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self gradually declining to the grave over the next couple of years.

From this cemetery mood I emerged as March advanced, and the collection of disgruntled units of the first three weeks or so began to take shape as a civilised community. The Pacification of Adams has already been mentioned. Another ameliorating influence was the discovery, here and there in Karlsruhe, and the importation into the camp, of other English authors than those already mentioned. By the beginning of March, the nucleus of a library existed, and on the seventeenth of that month Victor Bull, lying in bed, after lights out, retold the story of *Othello*, rejecting, with many picturesque details, Othello's statement to the Venetian senate that he did not desire Desdemona's company to Cyprus "to please the palate of my appetite, nor to comply with heat."

More important than anything else was the gradual improvement in our food conditions. On March 19th two parcels arrived for me, one of bread, the other containing tinned foods, tea, biscuits, etc.

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A week later, three bread parcels arrived for me in one day. On April 2nd, Warburton got his second parcel, and I another two loaves. On the following day, ten loaves poured in on me, and Warburton again got a parcel, and by the middle of April parcels were coming in fairly regularly for all of us. Letters, too, were now arriving.

My parcels arrived earlier than the others, because my brother, Arnold, who was in charge of an English internment camp, at Mürren, in Switzerland, got into touch with the Red Cross at Geneva, as soon as he heard from me. He also sent a wire through to England on March 3rd, by courtesy of the British Legation at Berne, informing my family that I was a prisoner-of-war. Nine days after this wire reached England, the Admiralty sent my wife the following letter:

"Admiralty,
"12th March, 1917.

"MADAM,

"With reference to Admiralty Letter C.W. of the 10th ultimo, reporting your husband, Sub-Lieutenant Hugh K. Lunn, R.N.V.R., as missing on the 5th February, 1917, I am commanded by

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My Lords Commissioner of the Admiralty to acquaint you that information has now been received that Sub-Lieutenant Lunn was missing after operations in France on the 4th February, 1917, and not the 5th February as previously reported.

"I am, Madam,

"Your obedient servant,

"For Secretary."

In addition to sending me parcels, my brother occupied himself with getting parcels through to the other English officers at Karlsruhe. One day, Hillam and Whitney were writing postcards to him, in which they were setting forth their requirements. Hillam had finished his postcard, and said to Whitney:

"Shall I thank him?"

"Why should you?" Whitney replied. "He's not paying for your parcels."

None the less, the civilising process was at work. Its chief instrument, apart from the arrival of food, was a Belgian lieutenant, Garray by name. Garray, who had been a prisoner-of-war since August, 1914, was still as scrupulously neat in dress and appearance as if he had only just received a pre-war commission. His

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charming sociable nature, assisted by an excellent knowledge of English, soon made him acquainted with all the English officers; and he and van Rossem, another Belgian, with whom he shared a room, began to ask some of us to meals. At one of these meals, I met two French captains, Rousselet and Peyrou, who were on the other side of the passage from Garray, in a room adjoining the big room where the French subalterns, the biscuit accumulators, lived; a proximity with awkward consequences, as it turned out.

Peyrou, a man of active temperament, with a compact figure and upturned moustaches, was saddened by captivity, and rarely spoke. I asked him once why he was so mournful, and he replied, "*Je pense des beaux jours passés.*" With Rousselet, who spoke both German and English almost as well as French, I became very friendly.

Rousselet, who had a high reputation as a soldier among the other French officers, was one of those ardent idealistic natures who welcome any great task to

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GARRAY

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which they can consecrate all their powers, and who, therefore, far surpassed in energy and courage men one would have supposed more fitted for war by their greater physical strength and less sensitive dispositions. But, in the leisure of captivity, what he had seen at the front began to weigh on him. One evening, after telling me very vividly of an attack in which he had taken part, he suddenly said: "I am ashamed I am a man."

I used to read Shakespeare with him and Garray, whose attention was apt to wander, for the movement of life itself, even in a prison camp, was dearer to him than any image of life. He would sit where he could command the goings to and fro from one block of huts to another, and would occasionally mutter a malediction on one of the French subalterns. The English officers were much better liked by him than the French, who annoyed him once or twice by singing a comic song in which the Brussels accent was made fun of. Their treatment of a very old Frenchman, who came to the camp at about this time, also vexed him.

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This officer had fought in the war of 1870. On the outbreak of the Great War he was surprised by the German advance, and, before he could get away, found himself many miles behind the German front line, in a village where he lay concealed for over two years. At last he was discovered, and sent back to Germany as a prisoner-of-war. The poor old man, who was nearly eighty, suffered from flat feet, and his shuffle across the gravel of the enclosure in search of conversation soon became a familiar sound. Rousselet, Peyrou, and Garray did their best to entertain him, but the subalterns, as soon as the shuffle was heard, flung themselves on their beds, and when he peered in at their door they were all snoring savagely. His faculties were declining, so he saw nothing significant in his repeated failures to catch these young men in one of their waking hours.

His situation had a romantic, mournful charm for him. "I shall die here," he used often to say, "and be buried under the trees of the Duchy of Baden;" words that came out of his youth, in the 'sixties,

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——, ——, ——, ——, GARRAY, PEYROU, ——, ROUSSELET

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in the days of the Second Empire, when the little Duchy, with its gaming, pleasure-loving capital, was almost more French than German.

But the old man, after a few weeks at Karlsruhe, was repatriated to France, and must long since have been laid to rest in his native soil.

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CHAPTER IV

TOWARDS the close of March, Victor Bull and some other English officers formed a club, where, in addition to bridge, baccarat was played for a time. A club of this order naturally desired a good cellar. The nearest thing to a drink recognisable as such by persons of taste was the brandy supplied by the German doctor to sick officers. Each member, therefore, fell sick in rotation, and returned from the camp hospital with a bottle of brandy. This circular epidemic was about half-way through its second revolution, when, one day, the member detailed for sickness, Holms by name, instead of being given brandy was ordered to strip to the waist and await examination. The doctor was busy that morning, and kept the half-naked patient freezing for over an hour. He then, after a very brief examination,

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assured Holms that he was in perfect health, with which disturbing news he returned to his fellow-members, and the epidemic ceased.

Garray, the only non-English member of this club, was a little surprised at the solemnity which invested his election, showing me a slip of paper that is before me as I write:

"To Lt. Garrie

"SIR,

"I have the honour to inform you that you were elected a member of the club at a general meeting held on April 2nd, 1917.

"Yours faithfully,

"E. L. KING, 2nd Lt.

"Hon. Sec."

The other members were assembled after Garray's election, and he was formally introduced to them. There was nothing to be alarmed about, I reassured him afterwards. It was a form of art, much practised, and highly valued, among the English.

More important to the camp as a whole than this club, was the first stirring of the desire for concerts and theatrical shows.

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Herbert Grimwood, an actor who had played important parts in London, a man in the late thirties, full of nervous energy and public zeal, had recently arrived; for the camp was now rapidly filling. On March 31st, he and Warburton organised a concert, in which he himself gave very brilliantly the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius. A few days later I was asked by an R.A.F. officer if I would write a one-act play. This officer, Shum by name, was an amateur stage comedian of the first order, and, later on, with another genius, Carruthers, gave really good shows. The play I wrote for him, *Prout the Perfidious*, was produced by Warburton on April 14th; and Shum as Marcus Prout and Victor Bull as Jeroboam brought out the full quality of the piece. The story may remind some readers of *Macbeth*, but the treatment is so different that the charge of plagiarism cannot stand. Later, I wrote *Humlock Sholes* and *Woffles*, skits on Sherlock Holmes and Raffles respectively, and *Gentle Jasper*. *Prout the Perfidious*, the most popular of this

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dramatic cycle, was played five or six times. I give *Prout* and *Woffles* in an appendix. If anyone objects, my argument, which seems unanswerable, is that either they are worth reading for their own sake, or they are such trash that their success is medically interesting for the light it throws on the abnormal mentality of prisoners-of-war.

The cast of *Humlock Sholes* included Robinson, who was given the V.C. for bringing down the first Zeppelin in England. Robinson never liked the publicity given to his Zeppelin feat, and now that he had been taken prisoner, after only a few weeks in France, it galled him more than ever. Later, in another camp, he made repeated attempts to escape, and was, I have heard, harshly treated. His health broke down, and he died shortly after his return to England, victim of a publicity which he was too sincere and modest to accept lightly.

Spring was now advancing, and the chestnut trees at the far end of the enclosure were putting forth their buds.

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There was movement, too, in the camp, which was kept fresh by a constant stream of departures and arrivals, for Karlsruhe was a distributing centre to other camps of prisoners captured in France, or on the seas. The population, therefore, was always changing, except for a nucleus, who for one reason or another were permitted by the authorities to remain. This constant movement greatly mitigated the monotony of our existence, though it meant some serious losses to the camp. Grimwood left us in May, and our other producer and stage-manager, Warburton, towards the end of April. Warburton had been badly wounded by shrapnel. One evening just after our arrival, the talk having drifted to the possibility of a court-martial on prisoners-of-war, Warburton remarked thoughtfully: "I was wounded in twenty-seven places, so I think they'll let me off lightly." The rest of us, all unwounded, meditated on this unequal distribution of favours in silence.

Whitney left Karlsruhe on the same day as Warburton, and Black had already

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gone. These two were both private citizens. As a general rule, the authorities kept as permanent members of the camp, only those who were engaged in running the social life of the place, or who spent money freely at the canteen. When I returned to England, people assumed that my knowledge of German had been the means by which I managed to remain so long at Karlsruhe, and, in the last part of my stay, acquired the job of receiving new arrivals. A reasonable inference, the incorrectness of which has ever since cast for me a doubt on all other reasonable inferences. The German authorities were not impressed by me. The camp commandant, a tall, very stout major, whose mind reposed massively on the foundation of two or three simple ideas, found me, I was told by an English officer in whom he confided, unmilitary in dress and bearing. A discomfited look came into his eyes whenever we met in the enclosure. But at last he became habituated to the sight, and after a year had passed he would smile patiently as we saluted each other. With his second-in-command, a smart-looking

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staff captain, who had an office in the town, I enjoyed hardly even a saluting acquaintance. For Victor Bull, on the other hand, though he knew no German, the authorities had a proper respect, as the founder of the Bridge Club, as an assiduous visitor to the canteen, and as, generally, a bustling man of affairs.

It was to Garray and van Rossem I owed my long stay in Karlsruhe. Though I had spent two summers in Belgium before the war, I learnt from them, for the first time, of the hostility between the Flemings and the Walloons, the two peoples who since 1830 have formed the modern kingdom of Belgium. During their war-time occupation of Belgium, the Germans encouraged this hostility. A Flemish Home-Rule movement, supported by Germany, was set on foot; and captured Belgian officers, of Flemish birth were humoured and indulged by their captors in the hope that they would join this movement. Van Rossem, a man of active disposition, and more typically Flemish than Garray, was already, when I first met him, an enthusiast for Flemish

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Home-Rule, and had begun to attach a very high importance to the Flemish language and literature, both of which were being stifled by the French-speaking Walloons. Garray never struck me as having the revolutionist's temperament. He was too human and sociable, too fitted by nature to draw delight out of ordinary existence, to need the stimulant of any political agitation, however admirable its aims. But after two and a half years of confinement, a man is no longer his normal self. He grasps at anything that can elevate him, and purge his stagnation; and this movement, like the Irish conflict for independence, was rooted at least as much in ideal as in practical desires.

Garray hardly ever referred to his internal struggles during this time. It was only after the war I heard from him that when he left Karlsruhe he joined the Flemish Aktivists, as they were called, thus breaking completely with his past, abdicating his commission in the Belgian army, and exposing himself to the death penalty if he returned to his country.

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Garray and van Rossem did not hit it off well in their joint room. As April advanced, they found it increasingly irksome to live together, and at last decided to separate. On the twenty-third of April, van Rossem moved to another room, and Garray invited me and Holms, the victim of the brandy epidemic, to take van Rossem's place. Rooms of two or three were as a rule reserved for captains and officers above that rank; so it was a stroke of luck for a junior officer like myself to get out of a big room.

I had first noticed Holms some weeks earlier at *Appel* (roll-call), where he used to stand in mournful abstraction, a look of distaste on his face. His air of superiority was not conciliating, but when I met him in Garray's room a little later, I found that though only nineteen he had read a great deal and was an extraordinarily interesting companion, in spite of his dogged omniscience, which derived partly from his youth and partly from his Scotch blood. His paternal grandfather had built up a flourishing tobacco business in Glasgow; through his

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mother he was descended from Nicholas Ferrar, founder in the early seventeenth century of a religious community at Little Gidding. Holms undoubtedly recognised in himself a closer temperamental affiliation to Nicholas Ferrar than to his enterprising Glasgow ancestor, of whom he spoke only once, in passing.

To live in a small room with two other persons for a year, sleeping and taking all one's meals there, and never moving from it more than two hundred yards, is an experience which would be valuable to writers on the marriage problem, who usually attribute the exasperation between husband and wife too much to sexual antagonism and too little to the antagonism naturally generated between persons in constant proximity to each other.

This exasperation is generally most acute at first, there then follows a period of harmony, and the last and longest stage is one of alternating harmony and exasperation.

During the first few weeks, Garray,

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I am afraid, often regretted the change from van Rossem, who, like a divorced wife of the magnanimous kind, frequently called on Garray, hailing him through the window, and being rapturously hailed in return. But after a time Garray became habituated to us, and what exasperation there was usually arose between Holms and myself, both of us feeling for Garray the sympathy which his charming, unselfish nature attracted.

One of the traits which at first distressed him in us was our informal manners. Holms, for example, an extraordinary athlete with very flexible limbs, preferred to read with his feet rigid in mid-air above his head, his body sunk deeply in a deck-chair; and neither of us, during the warm months, wore a tunic, whereas Garray was always perfectly turned out. Our language, too, was quite free. This last trait, perhaps out of courtesy, perhaps as a vent for irritation against us, Garray finally adopted, and when he was cooking our meals, we used to hear him addressing the stove with strange ferocity: "God damn this . . .

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stove! . . .! . . .! Ah, you bloody stove! . . .!"

One day at lunch when we had been a few weeks with Garray, he asked us, after a long silence, during which he seemed to be thinking hard, whether we belonged to the English aristocracy. "I don't" I answered immediately. My promptness placed Holms in a difficult position. Had I hesitated, he might have come down on the Little Gidding side of the fence, but my swift modesty imposed Glasgow on him, and he murmured: "Nor do I."

Our orderly, a French soldier, Gustave, an alert, dominating little man, looked after us wonderfully. He was especially attached to Holms, whose youth, melancholy, and, for his years, rather frequent recourse to the unsatisfactory bottles supplied by the canteen, all brought out a fatherly protectiveness in Gustave.

"Look at him!" Holms said one morning at breakfast, glancing out of the window. "What life and energy the little man has!" Gustave was swinging

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along towards the baths, for his morning shower, but as we looked he flung up his hands, and turned sharply round. He had forgotten his towel, and as he came back for it, with a punctured air, Holms smiled ruefully. "An image of all action," he sighed. "Ardour and anti-climax. . ."

There was another French orderly who figured in a scene worth recording. This Frenchman was supposed to be a Parisian apache, and answered to one's idea of that type, being dark and slight, with a sulky, savage look. A pair of boots, belonging to an English officer, vanished. One day, the apache, who was orderly to this officer, appeared in boots which strikingly resembled those that were missing. The English officer did not care to put it to him directly that he was wearing stolen property, but he was indignant, and his indignation spread in the course of the afternoon among his friends. Finally, Victor Bull, with this officer and eight or nine others, marched up to the apache, who was walking across the square. The apache

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paused, and the officers, forming a circle round him, stared in silence at the boots. I was passing at the time, and joined the circle. The apache could not be described as looking unconcerned, for that would imply awareness of us, and his negligent abstracted air breathed an utter solitude of mind and spirit. Victor Bull puffed and snorted. The others began to murmur. The apache remained listless, and at last the circle dissolved.

May was a fine month, and Holms and I spent most of the day reading under the chestnut trees. In the long calm evenings the idea of escaping attracted us. Switzerland was not far away, and we pictured ourselves wandering through fields, by the smooth-flowing Rhine, under a full moon, each day nearer the mountains, which would come faintly into view as we approached the frontier.

Perhaps because of its floating population, there were no escapes from Karlsruhe, and as far as I know, only

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one attempt was made. This was set on foot by the French subalterns, who began to excavate a tunnel from their room, under the room occupied by Rousselet and Peyrou. The attempt was not serious. It was done only for effect, Rousselet said, and one could not but agree with him, for conversation in his room, or Wagner's Ring, which he used to play on his piano, was, during a couple of days, made difficult by the noise of the excavations beneath. On the second day, these suspicious sounds were duly noted by a sentry, and reported to the authorities. The commandant and his staff-captain were annoyed with Rousselet, whom they seemed to think guilty of an unfriendly action, in allowing the floor of his room to serve as the roof to this abortive tunnel. The fact that his rank, knowledge of German, and high reputation with his fellow-officers, made him the natural intermediary between the authorities and his compatriots, seemed to the commandant, who was dull but honest, and to his second-in-command, who was certainly not dull,

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a sufficient reason for Rousselet to oppose any action that would disturb the authorities.

So Rousselet, to our lasting regret, was sent to another camp, on May 10th, and we heard no more the dwarf's lament in the Ring, ending in Rousselet's favourite phrase "*Müh ohne Zweck*" and the noise of purposeless toil beneath the flooring of his room was also heard no more.

Now that parcels were arriving regularly, no one went near the dining-room. Our orderlies would bring us our rations of potatoes from the kitchen, but I don't know what happened to our bread, which we never claimed. Perhaps the half-starving sentries bought it from our orderlies.

We opened our parcels in a room set aside for that purpose, a gruff but good-hearted German examining the contents, and himself prising open the meat and milk tins, the contents of which we bore back on plates to our rooms. Our system of dividing our food at meal times was simple. Whichever of us

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divided the dish, took the remaining portion, after the other two had made their choice.

The amenities of social life were now fully developed, and we would dine out from time to time, and in our turn welcome guests to our room, one of the most frequent being Victor Bull, who would also drop in fairly often after supper for a talk. In spite of certain faults, he had a large and expansive nature. Among historical characters, he most resembled Henry VIII. Like King Hal, he was warm-hearted but changeable, and would have made an equally devoted husband between beheadings. Tudor magnificence appealed to him. Criticising our literary taste one evening, he said: "Give me a book like *Kenilworth.* Grand! Grand! By God, that's what I like—Courtiers, sumptuous dress, ceremony!" He bowed and made sweeping movements, as though doing obeisance to Queen Elizabeth. We, and especially Holms, whom he admired as a youth of genius, but whose growing aversion from social life he deplored, seemed to

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him lacking in worldly sense. "The clever man," he said, one evening, "makes good." At the same time, it weighed on him, I thought, that two such dreamy litterateurs should have got into a small room, while he, with his flair for the actual, was still housed with the proletariat. This was, in fact, a sore point with others besides Victor Bull; and one day Garray told us the commandant had been informed by an English officer that Holms and I were conducting anti-German propaganda in the camp. The commandant, on the strength of this information, wished to eject us from Karlsruhe, but Garray called van Rossem to his support, who rushed to the fight with his usual generous zest, and between them they charmed the commandant's apprehensions to rest.

I exposed myself to some ill-feeling, on my return to England, by giving this complaint by an English officer to a German camp commandant as the only atrocity I had had any personal knowledge of during my imprisonment.

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This May was my best time as a prisoner-of-war. Confinement had not yet become irksome, the oppression of the war was lifted, and, fixed to one spot, the long days and clear nights brought back to me, almost in its first freshness, the longing of early youth for the beauty of the world. On one side of the camp, beyond the wooden palings, were houses with step-gables, recalling Bruges and its belfry, that chimes the quarters all night long. At the far end of the camp, facing me as I sat at meals, rose a tower and dome, Oriental in appearance, which we believed, I forget why, to be a Turkish bath establishment. On the other side of the palings which extended from our hut to the *Appel* hall, was a row of trees, that stretched to the west, and on fine evenings reflected the sunset from their trembling leaves.

These few sights served as images of the beauty in nature, or in the works of man, which we would one day see again. An occasional rainfall drew from the gravel of the enclosure an earthy smell,

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evoking fields, or a clearing in a wet wood.

Sometimes at night, when our repressed restlessness or our hard mattresses, stuffed with wood shavings, made sleep difficult, Holms and I would talk into the early morning, Garray joining in occasionally for the first hour or two, and then falling asleep. Obscure causes, innate or due to an unhappy period as a child with a bullying nurse, had, even then, at nineteen, made Holms melancholy and afraid of life; and have up till now hindered him from fulfilling his early promise. What possibilities he had, a full record of these talks would show. Lying under the open window, looking up at the blue night sky, he would take up the talk at some point, and follow it for perhaps half an hour, descending further and further into the subterranean passages of the mind, exploring dreams, and madness, and above all childhood, with its ceaseless unconscious search for clues to the mystery of life. But that this mystery concealed a beneficent secret he would never agree, and when his revulsion

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from life became too oppressive, I would steer the talk to poetry, and some line would charm his imagination and for a time compose his fears. One line in particular I remember, and how it died away into the calm June night: "*Dieu, que le son du cor est triste au fond des bois.*"

Holms had little verbal humour, though he had a deep and subtle appreciation of humour in all its forms, but, occasionally, during these talks, he would develop some fancy very quaintly.

"You know little about sharks, or for that matter, whales," he said one night. "The shark is not what you and others like you commonly suppose. Most sharks, I speak of what I know, have Dundreary whiskers, and legs some eighteen inches in length. The whale, on the other hand is mid-Victorian in mind and morals, the only deep-sea creature, indeed, that still believes in God. He keeps his valuables in safes lined with asworstos. Asbestos is resistant to fire, and asworstos, therefore, as even you will understand, is resistant to water. But enough of this.

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Shakespeare was a man of enormous physical strength, greater even than mine. Last night I met him in a dream. To prove his strength he cuffed me. I complimented him on his vigour. With that he cuffed me again."

The wooden partitions between our rooms were thin, and one night, when the talk had turned on religion, and we were discussing the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, a tortured voice from the next room cried out, with, I think, unintentional relevance: "For Christ's sake, SHUT UP!"

Our next-door neighbours were two English colonels. One of them, the victim just mentioned, was an energetic, capable man, and later escaped from another camp into Holland. Holms, speaking of him one day, said: "Life is divided into the Hows and the Whys. Our friend next door, seeing a billiard-table or a steam-engine, asks at once: 'How was this made?' and feels an urgent compulsion to make one himself. I, on the other hand, ask: 'Why was this made?' and in considering this problem, forget

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all about the billiard-table or steam-engine, thank God!"

The other colonel, also a young man, had the more genial nature of the two. Like Boswell, he was sometimes "in a cordial humour, and promoted a cheerful glass." On one of these occasions, when a number of us were spending an evening together, a second lieutenant, with a hare-lip, which made him lisp, kept on opening his rather confused remarks to the colonel with: "I thay, old bean—I mean, Thir." Another evening, Holms and I heard an altercation between this colonel and Lieutenant Faller, the camp adjutant, the only German officer whom we saw regularly. Lieutenant Faller's history, as told us in an expansive hour, was a simple one. An aunt left him a sum of money to assist him to the priesthood. He spent the money on beer and women, became a policeman, was present at the battle of the Masurian Lakes, took a dislike to active service, and secured his present job at Karlsruhe. A short, very stout man, with a choleric red face, he was quite good-hearted, but subject to gusts

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of irritability, either after drinking freely, or when he suspected he was being laughed at. Once, at Appel, which he nearly always supervised, an English subaltern, a lively little fellow, who had been taking wine at the canteen, cried out: "Look at old bugwhiskers with his helmet on—I rather like it." We tried to restrain him, but it was difficult. "No, but *do* look at dear old bugwhiskers," he pleaded. Lieutenant Faller turned purple. However, he knew no English, and we managed to quiet the subaltern before Faller exploded.

Being ignorant of English, he was usually accompanied by an interpreter, an elderly little man, Hans Semler by name, the gentlest, most peace-loving soul I have ever met. Hans was with Lieutenant Faller during his altercation with the Colonel, which took place in the passage outside our room, shortly before midnight, and developed somewhat as follows:

Lieutenant Faller to Hans [In German].
Tell him that by the camp regulations

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he is ordered to be in his room *before* eleven.

The Colonel. You——Boche! I'll knock your ——head off, if y' say 'nother word.

Lieutenant F. to Hans. What did he say? What, what?

Hans. He expresses his regret, sir; he is truly sorry.

The Colonel. You—Hun! Shove your face in for you, say 'nother word.

Lieutenant F. to Hans. What? What? What says he? Eh? Eh?

Hans [hoarsely.] He is *most* sorry, sir; he is *truly* sorry, sir; he *regrets*. [To the Colonel]. *Please*, sir, enter your room.

The Colonel. Why not? Good chap. Cer'n'ly.

Lieutenant F. Into your room! At once!

The Colonel. What? Whaddyousay? Lemme get at you you——Hun!

Hans. [opening door of Colonel's room.] This way, sir, this way (Colonel passes uncertainly through. Semler closes the door on him).

Lieutenant F. But what did he say? *What* in God's name did he say?

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Hans. He is *sorry*, sir. He begs to be excused. He offers his apologies. He is very *sorry*, sir. [Exeunt, Faller grunting.]

Hans had been in the hotel business all his life: and no doubt by force of association saw Lieutenant Faller as an overwrought hotel manager, and the colonel as a trying but valuable guest.

The colonel, meanwhile, had seated himself on his bed, after a cheerful greeting to his brother colonel, who acknowledged it curtly. A minute or two passed. Then a long sigh, followed in a reflective voice by "I'm tight, but I'm not drunk." Another silence, then a sudden rush from the room, for the canteen wine could be indefinitely retained only by the strongest stomachs. Another lull, another sudden rush. This programme was repeated over about forty minutes. At last we heard a weary voice which said: "Next time you might empty yourself completely."

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How much or how little to drink was one of the chief problems of captivity. In my own case, I was so little accustomed to drinking that even at the front it did not occur to me that a drop of rum would be a useful stimulant. On arriving at Karlsruhe, I again overlooked the uses of alcohol. A few wine-glasses every three days or so would have tided me fairly comfortably over the food-shortage period. By May, however, I had learnt the value of an occasional drink, and had decided to include a weekly bout in my routine. This I kept to, until within three or four months of the Armistice, when I dropped wine almost entirely, being by that time too devitalised to need a periodical explosion of suppressed energy.

If I were writing a testimonial for the manufacturers of the awful wine provided at the Karlsruhe and Maintz canteens, I should attribute my return to England in moderate health, and with a novel written during my captivity, largely to these weekly bouts. They supplied the place of travel, the companionship of

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the other sex, and the other delights of normal life; and two or three times, above all in the theatricals at Christmas and New Year, they helped me to enjoy a corporate revelry, more exuberant than any I have experienced in societies civilised by the presence of women.

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CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN LEWIS and Captain Hashagen are names which will be familiar to readers of the *Daily Express* during last November (1929), Captain Lewis, as the commander of a mystery ship in the war, and Captain Hashagen as the U-boat officer who sunk this ship. "Enemies in the war," the *Daily Express* wrote, "two gallant sailors, a German and an Englishman, met in a London hotel to-day, and greeted one another like long-lost brothers. The two officers had not met since the day Captain Lewis was landed in Germany as a prisoner-of-war. Now, Captain Hashagen has come to England, at the invitation of his old enemy, to appear with him and speak at a League of Nations Union meeting at Reading on Monday night."

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This reunion was criticised in the *Daily Express* by a number of correspondents, with whom, in a letter published on November 23rd, Captain Lewis dealt directly and capably. While sympathising with the vigour shown by Captain Lewis, my memory recalled rather painfully an occasion when I myself was so unfortunate as to attract his fire.

By the beginning of June, we had forgotten all about discipline and subordination, and most of us went about the camp in shirts and shorts. On the ninth of that month, *Prout the Perfidious* was given at a concert. The cast and the author had all drunk well. Victor Bull was especially sonorous and passionate; his delivery of—"At last, to free myself from this intolerable suspense, I consented to play the spy" still rings in my ears. At the conclusion, in answer to a call for the author, I delivered a little speech as usual. It was going well, when Captain Lewis, who had just arrived, stood up and rebuked me. I was not, he said, keeping up the dignity of the King's uniform in the presence of

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officers of other nationalities. I replied that if my public services were to be rewarded in this fashion, I would retire into private life and the consolations of literature. After the concert the cast of *Prout the Perfidious* discussed the interruption with a growing sense of outrage, and, finally, Holms and I hurried off to lodge a protest. Captain Lewis, who with his second-in-command occupied the room previously shared by the two colonels, was alone when we entered. He rose from the camp-bed on which he was sitting, and stared at us in surprise. Holms, who had been playing James, the footman, still wore charcoal side-whiskers and a weird uniform created out of odds and ends supplied by Gustave and others. "How dare you insult Hughie?" he roared. Captain Lewis was staggered, and, indeed, Holms with his whiskers, flaming auburn hair, and large frame, was a phenomenon at which even the commander of a mystery ship might justifiably be staggered. "How dare you?" Holms roared again, and advanced upon the captain. "Don't you

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dare to touch me!" Captain Lewis exclaimed, across the bed which, fortunately for all of us, separated him and Holms. "Well, don't you ever do it again then! Breaking our show up!" Holms leant across the bed, shaking his fist. "Keep back, sir!" "That's all right, Holms," I interrupted, with the detached dignity of the aggrieved party. "We can leave him now. Don't touch him."

Holms and I woke the next morning with a sense of apprehension, which increased as we went over the incident of the previous evening. "I believe he's a naval captain" I said. "And a naval captain," said Holms, "ranks above a colonel in the army." We looked at each other gloomily.

Gustave entered with a note. "Dear Sir—Will you kindly call on me at your earliest convenience. . . ." I handed it mutely to Holms, and left the room. Captain Lewis was awaiting me next door. His second-in-command smiled sardonically as I came in. Captain Lewis was sombre and composed. "Sit down," he said. "I suppose you realise that

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yesterday's incident, involving, as it did, gross insubordination to a senior officer, will be regarded very seriously if I lay it before a court-martial."

"I am extremely sorry, sir," I replied, "about that incident. I fully understand that it is a court-martial matter, and, of course, I have no defence to offer. I can only repeat that I offer my sincere apologies for it. At the same time, if I may explain the general situation, we have not been living under discipline here. The atmosphere has been more that of the wild and woolly west as shown in cinemas, free-and-easy saloon life, and that being so, it came as a great shock to be publicly charged with discrediting a uniform which, as a matter of fact, sir, I was not even wearing. Nor were most of the audience."

Captain Lewis nodded, with a suspicion of a smile. I was so touched by this magnanimity that I added: "My friend, too, sir, wishes——"

"I don't want to hear anything about him. I don't know who he is, and I don't want to."

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I was sorry that Holms, listening through the partition to this conference, was not to be included in our reconciliation, but it was tactless to have mentioned him, and I said no more. Captain Lewis rose, and we shook hands.

A few days later, Captain Lewis, who had been organising a debating society, asked me if I would open a debate, on whether it was preferable in modern Europe to be a woman. "And," he added, "bring a bottle of gin, if you think it will help."

These debates flourished for some months, though less vigorously after Captain Lewis left us in the third week of July. "That Life is not worth living," and "That it is preferable to be a woman in modern Europe," both of which I proposed, were unanimously rejected. "That moral courage is superior to physical," was carried by forty-five votes to seven, but with so little enthusiasm among the supporters of moral courage as to suggest that only a deficiency in moral courage prevented them from voting in favour of physical.

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It was a hot summer, and most of us became inert, with occasional bouts of irritability. Between Victor Bull and Captain Mackenzie, the senior Mercantile Marine officer in the camp, an antagonism developed, which used to show itself at committee meetings. At 2.10 a.m., one morning in July, the camp was awakened by anti-aircraft artillery, directed against three French squadrons returning from Mannheim; but presently, above the noise of the guns, was heard the voice of Victor Bull, leaning out of his window and anathematising Captain Mackenzie. The captain, who was in another block of huts, did not reply; nor did I ever learn the cause of this outburst, which, as I recall it, takes on an almost symbolic dignity, as though all our repressed longings and discontents had chosen Victor Bull for their mouthpiece.

How sick one got of one's own sex! Men, men, men, always men! Of the life passing up and down the streets we could see nothing but the moving tops of the electric trams, which our imaginations filled with beautiful women and

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children. The one exception to this plague of men was the girl secretary of the Commandant, a plump brunette, who used to trip to the Commandant's office each morning, a scowl on her otherwise pretty features. We would smile at her deprecatingly, while a deeper shade of scorn and hatred darkened her face. However, she gradually became accustomed to me, as one of the camp fixtures, and once, after I had been over a year at Karlsruhe, she smiled as we passed each other. I held out my hand, she hers, and a warm pressure ratified the superior claims of humanity to patriotism.

One day the representative of a neutral nation, Spain, visited Karlsruhe, to satisfy himself that we were being properly treated. A French officer asked to speak to him, and at once broke out into bitter reproaches against the German authorities. It was, he urged, mere barbarian inhumanity not to release us, on *parole*, for a visit to some establishment in the town. Once weekly would suffice. He was not exigent, war was war, and he would accept a weekly visit as, in the

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circumstances, a reasonable adjustment of this most pressing problem. "But never, not once, in months! Figure to yourself——"

The Spaniard, a dignified gentleman, was embarrassed. He regretted, he sympathised, he could figure to himself, but he feared, he very much feared . . .

So there was no weekly parade for this purpose. Had there been one, it would no doubt have been attended by numerous brisk and well-groomed French officers, and by a few self-conscious Englishmen, anxious to find out if there was anywhere in Karlsruhe where a decent drink could be got.

The differences of the French and the English characters showed themselves in various ways at Karlsruhe. It was rare during the summer to see a French officer without a tunic, or an English officer except in shirt-sleeves. The shows put on by the English were generally farcical, full of incident, and horse-play, and given by actors who had drunk sufficiently. The French plays were performed in absolute sobriety, with a grave

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regard for technical finish. Conversations in French and English were exchanged, but it was rather mournful to watch an English and a French officer pacing together under the chestnut-trees, nor would the same pair often be seen for more than a week or ten days. "He wanted to talk to me about *Shakespeare!*" I once heard the English member of one of these pairs cry to a stupefied friend.

The French, as a whole, and not only when they were acting, drank far less than the English. In fact, I recall only one drinking incident in which a French officer figured. The officer was Poncet, stout and bearded, an innkeeper in the Dauphiné, and the most jovial of his compatriots. He had been taking wine with some English officers, and had moved to a corner of the big room, a little overcome.

"*Je suis ivre comme deux vaches,*" he muttered.

"*Comme trois vaches,*" an English officer corrected.

"*Non! Comme deux vaches!*"

"*Non! Comme trois vaches!*"

"*Je dis—comme deux vaches.*"

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"*Et je dis—comme trois vaches,*"
and so on, through the long summer twilight.

Garray, during these months, had some savage altercations with our cooking stove, but even when the heat was at its worst, he had two charms which always dissipated his vexation. The first was his rendering of the reception by a husband of the news that his wife had died, opening with a low chant: "Ra-ra-ra—Ra-ra-ra—Ra-ra-ra—Ra-ra-ra," and suddenly culminating in a shout of exultation: "MA FEMME EST MORT—E!"

The other was a dialogue between a Tristan and Isolde of the cat world.

Tristan [piercingly]. *Mont-en-haut!*

Isolde [doubtful]. *Et pourquoi faire là-haut?*

Tristan [voluptuous]. *Pour faire l'amour là-haut.*

Isolde [sharply]. *Et ma réputation donc?*

In the latter half of June we were troubled by mosquitoes. Holms, who in the first months of captivity was so chubby that I nicknamed him Oxo, suffered especially from their attacks, and one

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night, his feelings intensified by wine, cried out from his bed: "In another moment I shall rush under the table, and hide there, screaming." But the mosquitoes disappeared in July, and during the height of the summer Holms, who loved heat and sunlight, was fairly content by day, basking in his deck-chair. As darkness fell, his deepening melancholy welled up. One evening, while taking a stroll, I came upon him in one of the scanty flower-beds which bordered the grass-plot at the far end of the enclosure. He seemed to be burrowing. "Hallo," I said, "What's up?" Wine had melted his daytime impassivity, and he groaned, "I'm trying to get back, old man." "To England?" "No! No! To my childhood. Can't you *understand?*" He gazed at a flower, crushed between his thumb and forefinger. Flowers, I remembered, were peculiarly associated for him with childhood. "Can't you *see?*" he asked. "That sentry over there can. He seems to be getting restless." "Damn him! Oh, *damn* him! Why——? But it's *life*. It's this damned trap we're caught in.

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No one can help. No one!" "Hurry up, Oxo! He's coming across." "You're right. I'll come. But, oh God! (looking at the flower) I was so *near*."

Garray, like the French officers, was temperate in drink, and rather puzzled by the English liking for occasional bouts. One evening in September a jovial young colonel, who was with us only a few weeks, looked in at our window for some friendly words. It was obvious to Holms and me, but not to Garray, that the colonel had come from the Canteen. In the course of the talk, Garray remarked of some officer: "He drinks a great deal." The colonel's eyebrows went up, and in a tone which perfectly blended astonishment and reproof he answered: "Well?"

This colonel got into difficulties by referring to the Germans as Huns, during a turn he gave at a concert. Sent for by the commandant, the colonel explained, that Hun was a nickname for German, but carried no unpleasant meaning, as far as he knew. Hun, German—he failed to see what offence there could be

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in using the one name rather than the other. But, the commandant gasped, had the colonel never heard of the Huns? Attila—had the colonel never heard of *him?* Attila, said the colonel, heard of Attila? No, he couldn't say he'd ever heard of anyone of that name. Who might he be? "But this is extraordinary!" the commandant cried, and, sending for a German encyclopædia, instructed Hans Semler to read out the article on Huns in English. The colonel listened attentively, and when it was at last over said that, of course, he now entirely understood why the Germans objected to this term.

Summer merged into autumn, autumn was passing into winter, and though the stream of arrivals and departures flowed on, the English nucleus stood firm. One would have said that nothing could dislodge it, and that Victor Bull, especially, was destined to be co-terminous with the camp. But towards the close of October the Italian collapse at Caporetto threatened to overflow the Austrian prison-camps, so a large contingent of

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Italian officers was forwarded to Karlsruhe, and the whole English colony, and many of the Frenchmen, were instructed to pack for departure on the following day, to make room for the Italians. The Flemish lions, Garray and van Rossem, at once rushed to the commandant, who had already put my name down once for departure, and Holms's twice, and who was, no doubt, congratulating himself that this time he had done the trick. The fight was obstinate, but he yielded at last, on the condition that Holms and I should make ourselves useful in the camp. We accepted this stipulation.

Early next morning, it was October 31st, Victor Bull looked in at our window to say good-bye. "I've just heard you two are staying on," he said. He seemed low-spirited, and, indeed, the dark autumn dawn was not calculated to foment buoyancy. Other forms loomed up behind him, Adams, Shum, half a dozen of the oldest inhabitants. We shook hands all round. "Well, so long," "See you in England." "Hell of a nuisance." "Damn bad luck." "Hope your next camp will

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be all right." "Wish you were staying." "So long, old man." "So long." The sentences fell flatly. Holms and I felt remorseful at our good luck. I remembered Bacon's saying that good luck implies hidden merit, and would have liked to pass it on to Bull and the others. But, for Bacon's sake, I kept silent, and for the last time watched Victor Bull walking across the camp, slowly, not with his usual quick, busy step.

Our regrets were tempered when a little later we discovered that the officers who had gone to Trier camp, Victor Bull among them, had taken with them certain articles, theatrical and otherwise, in use at Karlsruhe. A correspondence was set up between Karlsruhe and Trier, which lasted for some weeks. Being now a public servant, in accordance with the commandant's desire, it fell to me to conduct the correspondence from our side. Trier remained unconvinced by my arguments, nor at this distance would I care to affirm that Trier, to which most of the officers who left Karlsruhe went, had not a fair claim to some, at any rate,

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of these articles. But I am sorry Trier disdained to answer my last letter, which ended: "In the letter from the Camp Committee of Trier, we read that in turning over the residue of Camp Funds the late committee felt that its obligation to the Camp was more than fulfilled. As the funds turned over were 43 marks 60 pfennigs short of the debts incurred, a deficit that new officers have had to wipe out, the obligation felt by the Trier members of the late committee to this camp appears as a minus quantity."

Meanwhile, new English officers were arriving. My job was to interview them individually and explain the procedure for cashing cheques, informing relatives of capture, and so forth. I reproduce, in a condensed translation from the German, the information given to new arrivals.

1. *Cheques.* The American Express Company cashes cheques on Cox and other British banks. Cheques up to £10 can be made out daily at the cash office, from 3 to 4 p.m. These cheques are forwarded to the office of the American

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Express Company in Berlin, and cashed immediately. An officer writing a cheque in this camp receives the money in five or six days.

No cheques can be sent to England or any other country.

2. *Parcels.* Officers need not inform their relatives what to send, as full information is provided by the societies which dispatch parcels. Up to the present date, private parcels may be sent. Officers may, of course, ask for special articles—e.g., overcoats, bacon, quaker oats, pipes, etc. Books must be sent through a publisher, not privately.

Tauchnitz editions, containing the best-known English writers, may be ordered through the Canteen. Also French and German grammars, etc.

3. *Distribution of Food and Clothes.* Unclaimed parcels, parcels from relief societies, etc., are distributed by an officer, who warns each hut of the hour and place of distribution.

4. *Letters.* Four postcards and two letters may be sent each month. A

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letter must not cover more than six sides of the notepaper bought at the canteen. But more than one letter may be written on the six sides provided the six sides are enclosed in the same envelope. Picture postcards are not included in the four monthly postcards.

5. *Information of Capture.* To be sent on a postcard addressed to:

Red Cross Society, Section Anglaise, Geneva, Switzerland.

The contents should be: "Please wire to——that I am well and prisoner Karlsruhe." Signature.

The cost of the wire is collected from the addressee.

After the battle of Cambrai, when a great many officers were captured, I was requested to write out all their names and the addresses of their nearest relatives on sheets, which were forwarded to Geneva; this arrangement being simpler, except for me, than the posting of scores of cards. The job was sometimes a long one, especially after the March offensive.

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Once, the tedium was broken by four successive names, the combined rhythm of which has fixed them in my memory: Shuffle-bottom, Goodchap, Pristo, and Spiro.

Books, as laid down in Clause 2 of these regulations, had to be sent through a publisher. Had they been sent privately, they might have contained files or other contraband articles. Even when sent through a publisher, they sometimes roused suspicion. In Max Beerbohm's *Christmas Garland*, which I had written for, the vowels in the names of the authors whom Mr. Beerbohm parodies, are omitted; for example, B–rn–d Sh–w, and J–s–ph C–nr–d. I was questioned about these dashes, and, my explanation not carrying conviction, the book was withheld from me for ten days, so as to render the information conveyed in this code out-of-date and valueless.

The distribution of food and clothes (Clause 3) was given to Holms. As by this time we had accumulated a good deal of food and clothing, we added what we could spare to the articles dis-

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tributed officially. From time to time, among new arrivals, these gifts of ours, I was told, were regarded askance, though I don't remember anyone refusing them. After a little, I found it easy to detect members of what called "The Depend-upon-it or Take-it-from-me Brigade," officers with a dark view of human nature who would mutter among themselves: "Depend upon it, those two fellows don't give away that stuff for the fun of the thing. German spies, take it from me."

The chairman of the new camp committee was a Serbian colonel, who, I think, arrived at Karlsruhe in September, with three other Serbian colonels. All four were on the headquarters staff of the Serbian army, and had taken part in the famous retreat at the outbreak of war.

Garray became friendly with one of these colonels, and they would discuss together the wrongs of small nationalities, and the crimes of big. A strain of Anglophobia crept into Garray's talk, and one day he told Holms and me that

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Europe was getting tired of England, and would presently combine to punish her. "How soon?" we asked. "Don't trouble about that," he replied. "You will not lose by waiting. Ha!"

One day this colonel showed me a letter from an Englishwoman, who, as far as I remember, was sending him parcels. "We in England," she wrote, "want to feel in touch with all our Allies, and help them all that is in our power. I am only a simple English lady, living in the country in the very middle of our little island, but all I have and all I love are in the midst of this war, and I have lost my dearly loved elder son in it." The colonel was greatly touched by this letter, but for England itself he had no affection. Why, he asked me, had England not sent half a million men to Serbia in 1914, to save her from the horrors of the retreat? Why didn't England free Ireland? Why were people allowed to starve in London? Why had England objected to the assassination of King Alexander and Queen Draga? Serbia

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had surely as much right as England to kill her kings.

France was the only country he approved. He disliked Italy and Greece and Germany. He hated Austria, and for the Bulgarians he saw only one cure, total extermination. Russia he was uneasy about. They had done well to have a revolution, but a revolution without blood was useless, and so far the Russian revolution had been conducted too mildly. The Serbians, he continued, were not barbarians, as the Germans and Austrians pretended. They had a good literature, civilised manners, songs, and schools, and they knew the best authors of other countries. Shakespeare? No, he did not like Shakespeare. Shakespeare was not popular in Serbia—too much bloodshed; but the plays of Oscar Wilde were highly esteemed.

We had other talks after this one. He was very sincere and open, but had suffered too much both as a man and a patriot to see any hope in life. His brother, a writer, had committed suicide during the retreat, and he himself had

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neither wife nor children, having refrained from marriage for fear of hurting his mother.

Home life in Serbia was, he said, being corrupted by the modern spirit. The wife no longer rose when the head of the house entered the room. Sons were becoming indifferent to their mothers, and divorce was spreading. The same canker showed itself in politics. Cosmopolitan dandies were replacing patriots in the diplomatic service. The Serbian Minister in London was more interested in spiritualism than in Serbia. In modern Europe a diplomat was required to speak French, hunt, make love, and neglect his country's interests. And the armies were no better—no freedom of speech or thought, and the senior officers "*plus âgés pas plus sages.*" But war, or rather the present war, was a mad business altogether.

One day he handed me two sheets of Serbian proverbs, written out by himself, in the original, with a French translation. Some were already familiar to me, as, for example, "Out of sight,

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out of mind"; but others seemed peculiar to a patriarchal close-knit community: "He who does not wish his brother for a brother will have a stranger for his master," and "The first grief you support alone is your mother's death." One of these proverbs was unfamiliar to me, though it seems to express a universal truth: "Happiness must be met. No man can overtake it"; and there was another proverb which I did not then know and do not yet understand: "May God give you not what your mother but what your wife wishes for you." The colonel, too, was puzzled, placing ? ? ? after it, as though asking, in concession to modern laxity, which wife?

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CHAPTER VI

LANCE SIEVEKING, the novelist, then twenty or twenty-one, arrived about the middle of November. An interesting side to my official job was that it brought me into immediate contact with those of the new-comers who realised that a little enquiry and enterprise will better any situation. While the mass of arrivals accepted what came to them, a few at once explored possibilities, and one of these possibilities was the officer who received them.

Sieveking, a full lieutenant in the R.N.A.S., had been captured with two sub-lieutenants, Macdonald and Smith. Very tall, handsome, and well-groomed, Sieveking perfectly realised the commandant's conception of an officer, and was almost at once given a small room with his two flying companions. Between

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this room and ours a commercial treaty was concluded. We exported food, clothing, books and ideas, and imported the last article. Our food, clothing, and books, were welcomed, but on the exchange of ideas the Sieveking combine undoubtedly felt that they had the worst of the bargain. My opinions on life seemed to them unsound, and Holms' unintelligible; for Holms, as the months passed, was becoming less and less articulate.

Sieveking, on the other hand, was as articulate as his godfather, Mr. G. K. Chesterton, whom he somewhat resembled in wit, humour, profusion of ideas, and eerie fancifulness, the whole seasoned and controlled by religious orthodoxy. When, in answer to a couple of apparently disconnected sentences and an unfinished Blake quotation from Holms, Sieveking, arching over his opponent like the seventh wave in an Atlantic storm, broke in a cataract of protest and argument, it vexed him to be countered with nothing but a sad smile and a headshake of pitying dissent.

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In a picture of small talk at the canteen, written after the war for *The New Cambridge*, Sieveking introduces Holms, in effective contrast with Ringer, an actor with an endless flow of amusing maledictions on everything. "'This *weiss wein*' (Ringer is addressing Sieveking) 'is absolute rot-gut (*Erpch!*). But I'll have no more. *S'il vous plaît, voulez-vous*—no, I mean, I don't know your God-forsaken jargon. Gimme another weiss!' The tumbler of pale yellow liquid arrived. 'It's a rotten language, anyway,' said he. 'Any decent person would hold his hand in front of his mouth while speaking it. Fancy saying '*funf und zwanzig pfennigs*' to a stranger and spraying him all over!'

"I heard a deep groan beside me. Looking down, I saw a shock of dull red curls. The face was buried in the hands. Unutterable melancholy breathed from every curve of that crumpled figure. I laid a hand upon his shoulder.

"'Well, Oxo?'

"'Hughie—old man. That's the devil of it——' he said vaguely, and looked

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up. 'Oh!' he groaned, when he saw it was not Hughie. 'I *thought* you were Hughie,' and subsided into gloom once more.'"

Some years after the war, when Sieveking and I were talking one day about Holms, and regretting he had not yet written anything, Sieveking said ruminatively, "Is it better to have tremendous things you can't utter, or to utter tremendous things you haven't got?"

Sieveking did certainly from time to time utter tremendous things he hadn't got, but this was only the reverse side of his prodigal fancy. When he became too discursive, Macdonald, his wise humorous and rather melancholy companion, would pull him up short. One evening, in our room, between 9 and 11, when the light had been cut off as a camp punishment, for some indiscipline, Sieveking's voice rose and fell, rose and fell, in the darkness, giving out a medley of bizarre fancies and vast, soothing and inconclusive generalizations, until at last Macdonald spoke.

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"How much longer are you going to go on wrapping up nothing in interminable bandages of verbiage?"

"A little hard that," I suggested.

"That's nothing, nothing!" Sieveking said. "I have been insulted by experts. But about reincarnation, another point strikes me. Once get it generally accepted, and it'll put an end to war. Here are England and Germany fighting each other. We'll win, of course, and impose a heavy indemnity. But supposing all of us are going to be reincarnated as Germans in forty years or so, and find ourselves paying this indemnity to the Germans, reincarnated as Englishmen. That kind of possibility would make war altogether too chancy a business."

"No more war-time flying then. You'll miss that."

"By God, yes! The sense of power —open the throttle and pull back the wheel—fly out into the night! Pull the wheel one way and an enormous wall looms up above you—bank over as the observer drops—count, one, two, three—a huge concussion; the machine shakes—

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from below the crash of falling masonry, and the piercing screams of disintegrating humanity."

"Surely you can't hear screams at that height."

"Of course not. Don't be dull."

A long silence and then in a quiet, sinister voice, apropos of nothing, "It is at midday that the worst things are."

Sieveking never let the monotony of our life flatten him out. Everything was charged with significance for him. Once, having just bought a deck-chair, he discovered on it the name of a cousin who, as he already knew, had passed through Karlsruhe during the summer. I met him a few minutes later. "Hughie!" he cried, curving over me with outspread arms, like some super-terrestial albatross. "What d'you think's just happened?" I braced myself for a portent. He told me. "It almost makes one believe in God" I said.

Sieveking, however, scored in a verse which he attached to a caricature of Holms and me. There were certain lines

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from the Ballads, Donne, Keats, and others which Holms used to quote to himself, in a melancholy monotone; and on my wine-drinking day I would join him in this occupation. After lunch, over a couple of bottles, Holms at one end of the table with his feet on it, I at the other, we passed the short afternoon and long evening searching for new lines in the poets, worthy to rank with our favourites, but always returning to half a dozen verses, our love for them heightened by the wine, and our enunciation gaining in fervour as it lost in precision.

During one of these sittings, Holms went to the canteen for another bottle, and on his return met a second lieutenant, who was coming to see me on business.

The following duologue took place, in the passage.

Second Lieutenant: I say, could you tell me, does Lunn live here?

Holms: So must true lovers' souls descend
To affections and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend.
Else a great prince in prison lies.

Second Lieutenant: Ha, ha! Yes! I say, does Lunn——

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Holms: But, Good God! Can't you see it?
"Else a great prince in prison lies."
Second Lieutenant: Yes, of course, but I say, does——
Holms: "Else a great prince in prison lies."
Can't you *see* it?
Second Lieutenant: Of course, I can. Really. But I say, does——
Holms: "A bracelet of bright hair about the bone."
(*slowly*) Oh, God! (*pleadingly*)
"*Will* not he let us alone?
And think that here a loving couple lies
who thought——"
Second Lieutenant: I say, does Lunn——
Holms: "Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known." (*Exit Second Lieutenant*)

(*a pause*)

"They saw the moon arise, the colour of hay,
And all that sun-drenched land grow dull and brown.
And now one star floats out above the town,
A purple mist drifts low upon the leas,
And spectral cattle dream beneath the trees.

(*a long pause*)

And all that sun-drenched land grow dull and brown."
Can't you——? He's gone. Oh, God!

This last quotation was from Kenneth Hare's *Estrildis*, a poem which Hare had copied out and sent me, and which I had submitted to Holms, to find out

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how it would strike a good judge, unbiased by friendship. He placed it at once with Donne and Keats in his affection, much to my satisfaction, for it did not come easy to him to accept, without important reservations, the enthusiasms of others.

Another stanza which could be frequently heard from us, during these sessions, and which finally provoked Sieveking to the variant given below, came from one of the Border ballads:

" He rode on and she rode on.
They rode a long summer's day,
Till they came through the woods to a high, high rock,
Above the deep, deep sea."

Sieveking's variant, illustrated by a caricature of Holms and me seated in meditation by the edge of a cliff, ran:

" And he spoke on and he spoke on.
They spoke a long winter's day,
Till they came to the end of an I . . . I talk
About the Deep Deep ME."

The room next to us was now occupied by Colonel Baldwin and Colonel Troughton, the Kent cricketer, the most delightful

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field officer I met in the war. Colonel Baldwin, who was the senior English representative, on the camp committee, was older than any of the colonels who had passed through Karlsruhe in the summer. His presence calmed us, and the occasional turbulence and dissensions of the summer vexed the camp no more. A Church of England service on Sundays was now instituted for the first time, though the hint that this was desirable came from outside, from the Dowager Duchess of Baden, an old lady who was rumoured to have happy memories of attending divine service with Queen Victoria in the 'sixties and 'seventies.

I was directed to appoint a chaplain from among the new officers, and was so fortunate as to find an ideal incumbent for this unpaid benefice in Colin Hunt, who looked like a gentler Don Quixote, and who always kept unimpaired his sense of public obligations, in spite of the irresponsible life we led.

Nearly every officer in captivity was in some degree demoralised by having no work or responsibilities. Our situation,

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too, was anomalous. Why should England and Germany, at variance on all other matters, unite to support us in moderate comfort? This was the anomaly, and the answer was not comforting to our feelings—Because they couldn't get out of it. We were like poor relations, supported to save the credit of the family. In such circumstances a person's energy and initiative are impaired; a curious proof of which, in my own case, was that whenever, at Karlsruhe, I dreamed I was at liberty and once more in England, my feeling was always one of fear, and of regret for Karlsruhe. But after my return to England, when I was normal again, it was always with alarm that I dreamt I was back in Karlsruhe, the oppression of captivity being now the dominant emotion.

It would be interesting to learn whether the English Tommy was as demoralised as the English officer by the very different treatment he received in captivity. According to some recent accounts, hard work on a starvation diet produced greed, selfishness, and unrestricted theft of

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each other's property. At Karlsruhe there were a couple of Tommies in the camp kitchen, who told me some of their experiences. Both were regular soldiers, and I therefore give their stories for their interest as fiction, should the reader have any difficulty in accepting them as fact. The first, a cavalry private, captured at Mons, had had endless rows with the Germans, owing to his resolve not to work for the enemy. Put into a munition factory, he replied to every order with "*Nix verstanden.*" Transferred to the land, he was equally stubborn, and at last, after giving a village mayor a black eye, was sent to a punishment camp. There they flogged him daily. "No water, either, sir. Lousy as cuckoos we were." Thirsty, too; a point he laboured for some time, until I took his meaning, and sent him to the canteen to obliterate the recollection of this drought.

The other Tommy had no stories of Hun frightfulness. His experience had been almost disconcertingly at the opposite extreme. A farmer's wife fell in love

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with him, when he was working on the land, fed him to bursting-point by day, and gave him half her feather bed at night. Her husband, in the late 'forties, was guarding the frontier at Constance, and presently returned home on a couple of weeks leave. The Tommy's instinct was to retire into the background during this fortnight, but the farmer's wife would not have this. "She made me sit at the 'ead of the table, same as before, and she made 'er old man wait on me, 'and me the dishes like a bloody butler! A bit thick, I thought it!"

At this date, round the close of 1917, most of us were rather apathetic about war news. The *Frankfurter Zeitung*, a paper very moderate in tone, and, as far as the times permitted, truthful in its news, came into the camp daily, and translations of the bulletins from the front were put up in the canteen. These we read with momentary interest, but our failure at Cambrai in November seemed to forecast an endless prolongation of the stalemate on the Western

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front; and successes elsewhere did not stir us. One morning Holms and I heard Gustave announcing the fall of Jerusalem to Colonel Baldwin and Colonel Troughton. His tone was triumphant, and, the success being an English one, he clearly awaited an even stronger outburst from the colonels. We caught a "Vraiment, Gustave"; and felt that this curious scene, a French Tommy announcing the fall of Jerusalem to British colonels on German soil had fallen flat.

One piece of news from the outside world at this time sticks in my mind because of the emotion with which it was told. It was an English subaltern's complaint about the food restrictions recently established in London owing to the submarine campaign. "The people these restrictions really hit are the officers," he said. "You can't get a lunch for more than three and six, or a dinner above five bob."

The camp was now at its most cosmopolitan; English, French, Serbians,

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Italians, Japanese, Russians, and a couple of Portuguese. The Japs, mercantile marine officers, used to play billiards on the table in the *Appel* room, and would break into infantile giggles at each cannon, disturbing one's preconceived ideas about Oriental impassivity and inscrutability. Between the English and Italians, who were almost as numerous as the French, there was more sympathy than between the English and French, but as none of the English officers knew Italian and few of the Italians knew English, our intercourse was for the most part limited to a few sentences in broken French. There was one exception, an Italian field officer, who knew English perfectly, and was well-read in several literatures. But it would need Walter Pater's pen to paint him with full sympathy, combining as he did an enthusiasm for letters and a Greek or Renaissance appreciation of masculine beauty. His range of reading embraced the English Bible. Across a photograph he presented to an English subaltern, who had spared him some

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articles of clothing before his own parcels arrived, he wrote: "I was naked and you covered me."

As far as I remember, the Italians did not take part in the Christmas and New Year concerts. The main item in each was a play by Sieveking, "The Light that Lied in a Woman's Eyes, or, The History of Eustace Eustace." Repetitions are seldom successful, but on this occasion the New Year's Eve presentation of "The Light that Lied in a Woman's Eyes" went even more uproariously than on Christmas day. I have perhaps given an exaggerated picture of French sobriety. They had, after all, a saying one used to hear from them occasionally: "*Pour tuer le cafard,* il faut être un peu brinde-cinque*"; and on New Year's Eve they attacked "*le cafard*" *en masse*. The one exception was an officer called Huret. Sieveking had borrowed Huret, who spoke English perfectly, and made up as a pretty girl, to play the heroine in his

**Le Cafard*, a North African beetle, which the French troops in Algeria and Tunis have converted into a symbol of melancholia, as to watch it crawling about is often their sole pastime.

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farce. Unfortunately, Huret took himself seriously as an artist. Sieveking's extravaganza had neither plot, characterisation, nor connected incidents. It was a medley out of which the actors improvised gags, business, whatever suggested itself, spurred on by the roaring of the audience, cries of encouragement from the wings, and applause from each other. Out of this Bacchanalian chaos Huret tried to create a part. His annoyance merged into anger, his anger into fury, and the distortion of his face between the rage he felt and the wounded love he struggled to convey was worth watching, when, at the climax of his part, he turned from Sieveking, foully murdered on the floor, to Ringer, his swaying and smiling assassin, and articulated with a dreadful effort: "How could I see one loved one cheat and betray another, without my heart being torn in twain?"

In this fashion we bundled the old year out. Life, in the first weeks of the new year, passed sluggishly. On February 15th, 1918, the anniversary of my

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arrival at Karlsruhe, I felt a sudden heart-sinking, as I reflected that a whole year out of my twenties had been wasted within this wooden enclosure, and two or three weeks later the sight of the first sticky buds on the chestnut trees was another reminder of time unprofitably consumed.

The theatre during these weeks declined so much that I was again requisitioned to write for it, and complied with "*Gentle Jasper*." Attendance at the debates fell off; all the stock subjects had been discussed, and no one felt equal to tackling Sieveking's suggestions, which included: "Should ships sink?" and "May curates condone?"

About this time, the death of an English mercantile marine officer on the day before our weekly concert raised the question whether the concert should be cancelled. Colonel Baldwin came into our room to talk it over with Garray. The French officers, Garray said, felt very strongly that there should be no concert. Colonel Baldwin's face expressed a reasonable astonishment. The dead man was

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English; it was a question for the English to decide, the Colonel said; and in the English army the band, on returning from a funeral, always played cheerful airs. That was the English tradition, and he saw no reason why the concert should be cancelled. It was the last thing the officer in question would wish, if he could express any opinion on the point.

But, Garray suggested, the German authorities might be shocked. "The Boche might be——! What the——!" The Colonel gazed at Garray in stupefaction. Garray, with quick tact, withdrew this objection, and the concert took place.

This is almost my last memory of Garray. On March 4th he told us that he and van Rossem were leaving for another camp, and on the next day we said good-bye to him, most sorrowfully, remembering his many kindnesses. He and I exchanged a few letters after the war. He was still in Germany, he told me, as the failure of the Flemish Home-Rule movement made it impossible for

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him to return to Antwerp. A few months ago (July, 1929) I heard from him again. "When at the beginning of 1923," he wrote, "the French and Belgian Armies occupied the Ruhr district, I was obliged to fly to Berlin, owing to the fact that in 1922 I had been condemned to death *in contumaciam* by a Belgian War-Court, in my quality of being a dangerous Flemish Nationalist. Dear Hugh, don't think I am sorry about it. On the contrary, I am proud of it, and if the same occasion would present itself again, I should not hesitate one minute, and repeat what I have done for my Fatherland, which is not Belgium, but Flanders. By the way, my friend van Rossem, the other Belgian lieutenant, who you surely will remember, was also honoured by the same punishment, equally for the horrible crime of being a Flemish Home-Ruler just as myself."

Garray, before leaving, had exacted from the commandant a promise that Holms and I should not be disturbed, and as the weeks passed the apprehensions we felt

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after Garray's departure subsided. On March 29th we asked Joseph Lee to take Garray's place in our hut. Lee, a journalist and black and white draughtsman, was a Scot from Dundee, short and active and nearly always busy, either with writing or sketching. In repose, his eyes were sad and gentle, like himself, for he was full of kindness; but he seldom allowed himself repose, finding occupation necessary to keep his spirits up to the level of his high faith in life. Everything suggested a short story to his fancy, or an argument, or a combination of the two. He was controversial by nature, a tendency especially drawn out in contact with Holms, against the wall of whose monosyllabic disagreement he was for ever dashing himself.

"Mon, I've got a grand theme for a short story, or, maybe a play. Ay, a play would suit it better."

"Well?" from Holms.

"Yon canteen. Behind the bar those kindly bearded South Germans, the verra cream of simple humanity, uncomprehending of our speech but twinkling

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sympathy for our unforrrtunate predicament. And on this side the bar, as rich a medley of characters and nationalities as man could hope to find, in a space equally restricted, the worrrld over."

"And the theme?"

"But that is the theme."

"It's a setting, not a theme."

"Mon, it's a *theme!* Yon bar, with those simple——"

"A setting, my dear Lee. Not a theme."

"Oh, mon, mon! Lunn, I appeal to you. Yon bar——"

"Sorry, Lee. It seems to me to be emphatically a setting for a play, and not in itself a theme."

"Ech, you two! But, look, I'll put it before you yet once more, clearly and concisely. Here, on one side, yon simple men——"

"A setting, old man. Not a theme," and Holms smiled sadly. Nothing daunted Lee for long, and his ruffled spirits would always compose themselves if we called on him to give us one of his war songs, which had recently enjoyed a big

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success in book form. How he used to roll out the refrain:

"At Neuve Chapelle,
That black borrrder of Hell!"

or fill his voice with tears over the parting of a Scotch Tommy from his sweetheart!

"I gie'd her a saxpence,
A saxpence, a saxpence,
I gie'd her a saxpence,
Afore I went awa'."

So reverent was the pathos with which he recited these lines, that I never dared to ask whether it was the parting from the girl or the sixpence which was chiefly troubling the Scot.

Most vivid, and most characteristic, of my many memories of Lee is a post-war one, late in 1919, when Holms and I visited his Chelsea studio one evening. He pressed us to stay the night, gave Holms his bed, settled me on a sofa, and himself lay down on the floor. A draught blew under the door all night, searching out a hollow tooth that was worrying him. He told me this when I woke up and

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asked him what sort of a night he had passed. He was clearly in considerable pain, but when, gazing at him from the sofa in belated concern, I expressed my sympathy, all he said was "Ay, mon! Life's a weirrrd jest."

Caporetto had nearly dislodged Holms and myself from our room and from the camp; but the far greater disturbance which followed Ludendorff's March offensive did not alarm us. With batch after batch of officers pouring in from the close of March onwards, we were kept so busy at our respective jobs that the notion we could be dispensed with did not occur to us.

The officers captured in the offensive were, on the whole, pessimistic, and the Germans, so far as we could judge, were at first exultant. Even the sober *Frankfurter Zeitung* lost its head, and, quoting from a despatch of Sir Douglas Haig, "The terrible slaughter of the enemy continues," took this to refer not to the losses inflicted by the English, but to the losses they were suffering. "*Er hat es ja gewollt!*" the *Frankfurter Zeitung*

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added, which can best be translated, "He's asked for it."

It was in the third week of April, as far as I remember, that Brigadier-General Dick Conyngham arrived at the camp. I went with the usual information to his room, which he was sharing with two staff officers. Scrutinizing me thoughtfully, he asked, "Are you English?" I was, I said, and added that there were two English colonels in the camp who had accepted me as such, and to whom he could refer for further information on the matter. He smiled, with a kind of wary amiability, and I left the room, pained at this fresh proof of an imperfect sympathy between myself and Brigadiers, other than German. Later, when we met again at Mainz, the Brigadier asked me for something to read. I lent him *Roderick Random*, but here again my luck was out, for when he brought it back a few days later, he said, "It's very coarse."

On April 10th, Sieveking and Macdonald left Karlsruhe. We were sorry

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to lose them, but did not foresee the same fate for ourselves.

On April 13th, tired of tin food and feeling out of condition, I started on a fast, taking nothing but water for the next five days. This brought my weight down by nearly a stone, but did not benefit me much otherwise, as I was ignorant of the correct method of taking a fast.

Officers were being passed through the camp so quickly at this time that we were kept perpetually regretting the loss of persons with whom we had just become acquainted. One of these losses was not merely a matter of sentiment. A Captain —, whose boots were worn out, asked me if I would lend him one of my two pairs, as he did not care to travel in his present ones. He assured me most earnestly that they would be returned at once. As he wore a monocle and had been at Eton, which I knew to be one of our leading public schools, I snobbishly trusted him; but the boots did not return.

Gerard Hopkins, Alec Waugh, and Milton Hayes all passed through Karls-

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ruhe in the third and fourth weeks of April. Milton Hayes arrived on April 20th. I had known his song *The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God* for years, and was much interested to meet the author. I asked him if he was feeling hungry. Yes, he said, quietly, he was certainly a little hungry. Food had been scarce since his capture, and, yes, he was feeling on the hungry side. We sat down to tea at about three in the afternoon. I had to leave him at about half-past three, to see new arrivals. Returning at five, I found that he was by now well into his meal. We talked for about an hour, though without diminishing the steady pace at which he ate. Several more times I had to leave him, but always, when I came back, he was eating. Roll-call at 9 p.m. interrupted him. He resumed afterwards, but the break had jarred him, and he lasted hardly another fifty minutes, totalling in all about seven hours.

In the course of this meal, Milton Hayes explained the intellectual processes which had directed him in the creation

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of *The Green Eye of the Little Yellow God.* "Edgar Allan Poe," he said, "shows, in his analysis of *The Raven*, that a good enough brain can create any effects it likes. Not a question of feeling at all. Just hard thought. Now I meant to make my *Green Eye* the biggest concert hit ever. So I asked myself, what are the necessary ingredients? First, pathos. Hurt 'em to make 'em love you. Well, what's the most pathetic thing in the world? Love frustrated by death. But woman's love is deeper and more lasting than man's. So kill the hero and leave his sweetheart to mourn him. Note, sweetheart not wife. Old girl in the stalls says to herself, "Poor dears, they never . . . not even that memory to look back on." See? It's just these little extra touches that count for so much. There's your pathos in the rough. The next thing is heroism. Who makes the most attractive hero? A soldier. Tommy not romantic enough. Must be an officer. What shall I call him? Something short and metrically handy, but a bit out of the way. Say,

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Carew. How put him across quickly, so that they all spot what he's like? Call him 'mad.' You've got it all there. 'Mad Carew'—a daredevil, the pride of the mess, up to any pranks. Now for mystery. Put your story in India, and you've got your mystery ready-made. You want a place to rhyme with Carew, and sound Indian. Khitmandu! Just right. Listen to it. Khitmandu! You don't want any local colour, mimosas and so forth, with a name like that. Fifths in the bass, an oboe off, and leave the rest to the audience. . . ." and so he continued, showing the intellectual necessity of Mad Carew's bet that he would bring back the green eye of the little yellow god, of the vengeance of the god's priest, of the suspense and terror of the colonel's daughter in the deserted barrack square outside the gay ballroom, and finally of her eternal vigil by her lover's grave under the replaced eye of the little yellow god.

We were sorry to lose Milton Hayes, who left for Mainz the next day. Three days later, on April 24th, Hans Semler

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knocked at our door, at 5 a.m. His face as he entered was filled with concern. "Gentlemen, I am so sorry. You must leave to-day. It is the commandant's strict order. I have risen one hour earlier than usual to tell you, so that you may have time to pack. Oh, gentlemen, I am so sorry. The commandant says he will not see you." The dear little man held out the fatal list, on which Holms and I read our names, underlined twice in red ink. We had been exactly one year in Garray's room.

At Mainz, I received from England a copy of a letter in which Colin Hunt described our departure from Karlsruhe. "Lunn and Holms have gone, alas, quite suddenly, and their books and their presence are sorely missed. . . . I felt a strong tie with these two. It was a really quaint sight to see Lunn, rooted out after a year here, gazing in dismay at his masses of stuff, and at a loss how to proceed, and then emerging with a crumpled hat, far too small, crammed on his head, looking less like a soldier than anyone I have ever seen, and quite

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unable to understand why everyone smiled. But the clouds soon passed away, and his hearty laugh was the last thing heard as he rolled out with Holms, or Oxo as he calls him. . . . With them went another man we would gladly have retained here—Captain Besly."

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CHAPTER VII

IT was marvellous, as I came out of the camp after fourteen months within its palings, to see complete houses from the pavements upwards, and the pavements themselves, and men, women, and children walking on them.

This ecstasy soon vanished, but I was glad to be in a train again, to look out of the window, and see fields and hills and rivers.

When we got out at Mainz station, and were standing on the platform, two or three women glared at us from a stationary train, and hissed, but without much conviction. Some of our party welcomed this incident, being on the alert for evidences of Hun savagery, and having so far not found much material to work on. One of these officers, a second lieutenant, had complained most bitterly to me at Karlsruhe that

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when he was captured, a German major spoke rudely to him. I urged him not to brood on this outrage, but, if he must think about it, to familiarise himself with its horror by substituting an English major for the German one.

Our new camp was the Citadel at Mainz, which is above the town, with a view of the Rhine and the beautiful Taunus mountains beyond. The Citadel, which has been a fortress since Roman days, consisted, when we arrived, of three stone blocks, built for army barracks, surrounding a large gravel square.

We entered through a huge gate which clanged to behind us, leaving us in a dark vault. At the other end of this vault a second gate, similarly huge, was unlocked, and we passed out of the vault into the grounds of the Citadel. For an hour or so we were shut up in a room in Block III, a gloomy building. Looking down on to the square, Holms and I saw Gerard Hopkins and called to him. "But this is frightful for you," he exclaimed. "I thought you were both entirely secure at Karlsruhe. I

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would come up to console you, but for the rude and licentious soldiery. Alec Waugh's here, you know, and Milton Hayes."

This civilised and sympathetic greeting reconciled us a little to the change from Karlsruhe. We were lucky, too, in our new quarters, a large airy room in Block II, with a view of the grass-grown top of the old Citadel wall.

There were nine of us in this room. Holms and I, as old prisoners, were given the beds by the window, a courtesy we repaid from our parcels, which began to arrive from Karlsruhe within three or four days. No one else in the room, or in the camp, received any for some weeks, except mouldy bread from Copenhagen. Parcels for two divided among nine meant rather short rations, but our discomfort was nothing after the February and March of the previous year. May, too, was exceptionally warm so we did not need much to eat.

There were over five hundred officers at Mainz, all English, and practically

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no one arrived or left during the seven months of the camp's existence. Holms and I had exchanged a floating cosmopolitan community for one that was fixed and English. There were other differences between Karlsruhe and Mainz. At Karlsruhe senior officers and chaplains were rare; I remember only two chaplains, both delightful men. But the net flung by Ludendorff on March 21st had caught persons who, in the usual routine of the war, were immune from capture. We had with us at Mainz, Brigadier-General Dick Conyngham, a group of colonels, two or three staff officers, and more than half a dozen chaplains. "I didn't sign on for *this*," one of these chaplains complained to Gerard Hopkins, adding in a brighter tone, "I shall, however, be out of here very soon. Representations have already been made, and all chaplains are to be returned to England as soon as possible." Meanwhile, Mainz was a vineyard of sorts, and the chaplains finely accepted it as such, pending their release, which took place after the Armistice, at the same time as ours.

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A fragment from a sermon preached by one of these chaplains was reported to us by Gerard Hopkins. "When you throng around the list of par-cels," the chaplain said, "you cry, 'There is a par-cel on that list for me.' It is not your par-cel,' you say to him who stands on your right hand, neither is it your par-cel, you say to him who stands on your left.' 'No, it is *my* par-cel! And I want you to think of Gud in the same way. I want you to cry, 'It is not your Gud, neither is it your Gud. It is *my* Gud!'"

Secular addresses to the whole camp were provided on May 5th, a Sunday, and on other Sundays in May and part of June, by General Conyngham in a hall that was later used as the camp theatre. In spite of certain limitations, already suggested, the Brigadier was out of the common run of army officers. Full of energy and force, he was resolved to keep our morale high. Some officers had got into the habit of emptying their wash-basins out of the window. An order was at once posted up by the Brigadier,

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ending: "This practice will cease forthwith"; and it did cease forthwith, together with such other practices as the Brigadier disliked.

In his Sunday addresses he dealt, as far as I remember, with our obligation to keep fit and behave decorously. The German authorities were nervous of him, perhaps thinking his influence over us dangerous, and he was removed from Mainz in the middle of June.

He had no successor; but there was another senior officer, a colonel of the regular army, who was at any rate unusual. On July 31st all officers were invited to attend an address given by him in the theatre. He proposed, he told us, to form a society, which he hoped would include everyone in the camp. The aim of this society would be to fit its members for the next war with Germany. At the moment we were disarmed. We could do nothing to damage the Hun in the conflict actually raging. But we could prepare for the future. The details of his scheme have become vague in my memory, but I believe he proposed to

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organize facilities for the study of economics, law, history, the colonies, naval and military strategy, trade, etc., etc., all with the one aim of wiping Germany out in the next war.

"I call this society," he concluded, "the Chatham League, after the great Chatham, and for its motto I take these lines, which some of you will know, and which give the spirit in which we're all going to work together:

> The Earl of Chatham, with his sword drawn,
> Stood waiting for Sir Richard Strahan;
> Sir Richard, longing to be at 'em,
> Stood waiting for the Earl of Chatham.

Well, that's that. It's my scheme, and I like it. And I hope you'll like it, too."

I asked the colonel, the following day, what would happen if in the next war we were fighting on the same side as Germany. The army was supposed to have no politics, yet here he was filling us with an anti-German frenzy which we might find hard to shake off, even at the call of duty. Was this wise?"

"I can't palter with you," he replied. "Not that I don't understand you.

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You're an idealist. So am I. I read Wells. But in this matter I can palter with no one. Good morning!"

Our interview was over, so I had no opportunity of asking the colonel why he chose as a motto for a League named after the first Earl of Chatham an epigram written at the expense of the second earl.

The anti-German heat in which the addled egg of the Chatham League had been incubated was not peculiar to its founder, though it raged in him more strongly than in others. At Karlsruhe, except after Cambrai, the officers had been captured individually. At Mainz the officers had been swept up wholesale in the greatest German victory of the war. Anti-German feeling was therefore stronger at Mainz than at Karlsruhe, apart from the more moderate tone natural in a cosmopolitan and constantly changing community.

At Mainz, too, there were a number of senior officers, and these, their fall being greater than a subaltern's, were

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proportionately more exasperated. One of our colonels, like the founder of the Chatham League in the regular army, used to bribe an elderly sentry with tea and sugar to say, "Damn the Kaiser," and "God strafe the Fatherland."

One day at roll-call the German officer in charge of Block II remonstrated with us in his usual urbane manner, and in excellent English. His name was von Tecklenborg; his nickname a rough Anglo-Saxon equivalent.

"May I mention, gentlemen," Captain von Tecklenborg said, "a little matter which I ask you to put right? In many of your letters there are complaints about your treatment here. For example, the food. But you are given the ordinary home ration, and you have your parcels in addition. Your surroundings, too, are not as some of you describe them. You have beautiful views from this square, and from many windows. There are places in this building, as in all buildings, where the view is not beautiful. But please do not write as if you were always in such

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places. May I beg you to be in future more objective?"

As we dispersed, I passed a group who were puzzling over the last word in this address. "Asked us not to be so objectionable—That's what he said," one of them insisted. The others nodded, but seemed not quite satisfied.

The courteous attitude towards us shown in this speech of Captain von Tecklenborg's was adopted also by the two officers in charge of the other blocks, though one of them, known as Canteen Charles, was rather a comic figure. Rumoured to be a grocer in peace-time, he was further rumoured to have secured the contract for supplying the goods sold at the canteen, and to be responsible for the extortionate prices charged. There was probably nothing in these rumours, but this officer was fated to be unjustly dealt by. Once, when he was in charge of a party on one of the walks we were taken from time to time, he fell into talk with some of us. "In peace-time," he said, "the German officer is a cavalier. In war-time a tiger." Had he himself been

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to the front? one of the party asked. No, he said, he had been unable to go to the front. He suffered from imperfect circulation, and his extremities were particularly affected. "Your feet?" this officer asked. "Yes, especially my feet." "Ah, cold feet, as we say in England." "Yes, that is my difficulty. Cold feet."

Above the officers in charge of the various blocks was a camp commandant, a general, whom we did not see often. He was a wizened little man, stiff and disagreeable to look at, the only German officer in my experience who answered to the popular English idea of a Prussian martinet. The general punished indiscipline on our part either by cancelling our walks for a time, or by lights out at 9 p.m. Once, from August 2nd to 14th, he locked up the theatre piano and the other pianos in the camp. As far as I remember, the usual form which indiscipline took was to cheer officers who had attempted to escape and been caught. Cheering during air-raids was also practised, and penalised.

Such reprisals were quite in order.

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The general's only entirely senseless regulation, enforced over several months, was that the covers should be taken off books sent us from England. I tried to rescue a Bible from this fate, but the censor, a non-commissioned officer, put my religious plea aside. "God," he said, "has suffered too much in the last four years to bother about a trifle like this."

On the whole, at Mainz, as at Karlsruhe, the German authorities regulated their attitude by ours, and as Mainz was more anti-German than Karlsruhe, it was proportionately less comfortable.

Life in our room of nine was very agreeable at first. We fell naturally into three groups: Holms and I as old prisoners and food purveyors formed one group; Maurice Besly, Wheeler and Melville another group; and Percival, Lunn minor, Brown and Hodges the third.

Maurice Besly, with his genius for comic opera, music and libretto, was fully occupied from the first. He at

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once set about composing a piece for the camp theatre, with the co-operation of Milton Hayes. A piano was installed in our room, and for some hours each day tunes and lyrics were rehearsed. Again and again—I see him as I write—would Besly, suddenly inspired, run his hands over the keys, and then turn round with a happy smile—"An improvement, eh? Not bad? Let's try it again. Catchy, eh? A hit?"

For the words of "Money Moon," and "There are lots of lonely ladies living in London," Milton Hayes was, I think, chiefly responsible. The collaboration of these two seemed perfect. But suddenly, after a fortnight or so, Milton Hayes retired into private life. The pressure of his own work, it was understood, prevented him from dedicating his energies to our theatre; and I imagine that he was also feeling the strain of eating all the loaves he bought from the camp orderlies.

For two months Besly was our only dramatist and producer, and his incessant toil was at last crowned with "*The*

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Girl on the Stairs," the most finished masterpiece, taken as a whole, which graced the Mainz stage. But at the end of two months a rival company sprung up, then a society for serious drama, then a second society for serious drama.

With all these companies competing against each other, subalterns who could, when sufficiently treated, pass for fairly pretty girls, were increasingly sought for. This quest brought out a latent femininity both in those selected to play women parts, and in the connoisseurs who had spotted them, and who were engaged in trying to spot others among our superficially not too beautiful second lieutenants.

Wheeler was Besly's first leading lady. His height was against him; he was well over six foot, but otherwise he scored a great success on his first appearance. One of our English orderlies was reported to have "felt all queer like," so ravishing had Wheeler appeared. But Besly, ruthless like all great impresarios, was keeping his eye open, and it was

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somewhat pathetic to hear Wheeler, at meal times, assisting Besly to canvass the points of possible supplanters. "Charming eyes, So-and-So has, eh, eh?" Besly would say. Or "I like young ——'s ankles, and I think his face won't come out too badly. What d'you think? What? What?" Wheeler could not but agree. In addition to his great height, he was very thin; and smaller and better-fleshed subalterns inevitably ousted him in due course from the fickle favour of the public. Had there been any provinces for him to tour, and had our imprisonment lasted another year, I'm afraid that he would eventually have ceased to get any engagements in the capital.

Melville did not act, but in our room's microcosm of English society he represented the aristocracy, and, therefore, owing to the close connection between society and the stage, naturally gravitated to Besly and Wheeler. Melville was very good-hearted, but his extreme youth, he was only nineteen, sometimes led to indiscretions. One evening, after Wheeler

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and he had cracked a bottle or two of wine, Melville remarked that only persons who figured in Burke and Debrett were gentlemen. Wheeler protested, and appealed to Besly, but Besly, resting in his bunk, declined to be dragged into the controversy. "What about country gentlemen, gentlemen who live in the country or near it?" Wheeler, who came from Ipswich, enquired hopefully. "No dam' good! Only people in Burke and Debrett," Melville insisted.

On another occasion Melville's youthful frankness led to consequences which might have been far more serious than they were.

We had a Russian orderly whose job it was to make our beds, and sweep up before breakfast. He used to bring in a teapot, full of cold tea, take a mouthful and jet it forth to lay the dust. A friendly chuckle-headed soul he was, the kind of person Tolstoi preferred to Shakespeare or Beethoven, and he would smile at us after each jet with so proud a look that no one had the heart to stop him.

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All the rest of the work in the room, the cooking, washing-up, fetching of wood, and getting food from the *Ausgabe*, the place where the contents of our parcels were stored, was done by Percival, Brown, Lunn minor and Hodges.

One afternoon, it was July 6th, Percival asked Melville to give him a hand with washing-up. Melville, from his bunk, answered that he was not accustomed to that sort of work. A few minutes later he left the room for a stroll. I had heard Melville's reply, and felt that it was one of those sayings, like the French aristocrat's, "Why don't they eat cakes?" which mark a historical crisis, a change in the system of things.

As soon as Melville had gone out my forebodings were realised. Percival and the others declared that in future everyone in the room would have to do his fair share of the work. They were —— and —— and —— if they were going to do it all.

I offered my services as an intermediary. They were accepted; and, going out into the square, I found Besly, Wheeler, and

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Melville, and laid before them the grave issues raised by Melville's indiscretion. Having obtained full powers to make such concessions on their behalf as seemed necessary, I returned to the revolutionaries. The collapse of the aristocracy put them in a good humour. A sheet of paper was produced, and we sketched out the various duties that each of us was to undertake in the future. The revolutionaries were generous in the hour of victory. Besly was not called upon to do anything, his time being occupied by the theatre. I, as what one of them called Director of Room Services, was let off with the self-suggested task of sweeping up after meals and scrubbing the table once a day; and Holms, Melville, and Wheeler were given the job of bringing supplies from the *Ausgabe*.

At supper that evening, Percival rose and made a short speech, expressing the attitude of that section of the room which had hitherto done the work, and which was willing still to do by far the biggest share. "Quite, quite . . . absolutely

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. . . most indebted . . ." was the response of the Court party.

By this date, everyone had for some time been receiving parcels. Holms and I were no longer food purveyors to the rest, and so no longer the objects of that cordial deference which had compensated us, during our first weeks at Mainz, for the loss of our little room at Karlsruhe. Many a morning now, when Holms and I while dressing spoke about some book that was interesting us, would Percival, six foot five, rear up from behind the piano, like some diplodocus or ichthyosaurus, and snarl, "Shurrup!" Food would appease the monster, and during the rest of the day he was friendly in his curious sardonic way, which, in the years after the war when we worked together, I got to enjoy unreservedly.

Persons who narrate remarkable things about themselves are usually expansive. They impose themselves forcibly. They beat down opposition and incredulity. Percival was not like this. One day I said to him: "With your reach and strength, you ought to be a good boxer."

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He nodded.

"Have you ever boxed?"

"Sometimes."

"Any serious boxing?"

"Oh, I boxed behind the line in '14."

"Really? What in?"

"Oh, there was an Army championship."

"That sounds useful."

A long pause.

"How did you get on?"

"Oh, I got into the final."

"Got into the final! I say, that was pretty useful."

A still longer pause, followed by talk on other topics.

At last—"By the way, what happened in that final?"

"What final?"

"The Army championship. Behind the line in '14."

"Oh, I won."

Brown was at the other extreme from Percival, just about five feet. He and my namesake, Lunn minor, used to move Holms to poignant eulogies. "They're so *good!*" he used to cry. "What a *dear* little man Brown is, and Lunn minor—

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pure gold!" Holms was becoming more and more melancholy. The sight of some hundreds of English officers walking round and round the square afflicted him more painfully each day. A breath of aimlessness and disintegration exuded from them, choking him. But he was as quick to appreciate anything sound and healthy as to revolt from the deterioration of men cut off from their normal activities. Hence his eulogies of Brown and Lunn minor, who were nearly always cheerful and occupied with working for others. The most shattering snore I have ever heard was Lunn minor's chief defect. In its mixture of gurgling and rending sounds, it conveyed the effect of a herd of hippopotamuses being milked in the middle of an earthquake; and many a night I leapt from my bunk with an "Oh God! That —— row again!" and rushed over to Lunn minor, whom, restrained by the recollection of his waking virtues, I would then gently prod, till he turned over on his side.

In some respects Mainz was superior to Karlsruhe. There were the Taunus

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mountains, which were especially beautiful in the evening light, there were occasional walks, there was the window in Roussell's room in Block I, from which we could watch the passers-by; and from an alcove off the billiard-room some hens and ducks and a green bank on which they used to waddle furnished a rustic scene that whiled away an occasional ten minutes.

But Karlsruhe, with its wooden huts and palings, its chestnut trees and grass plot where the donkey grazed, its step-gable roofs and Oriental tower and dome, and its changing and cosmopolitan society, was a far friendlier place. Even its view, though far more limited, was for that reason more stimulating to the imagination. Another disadvantage of Mainz was that one could not find a secluded spot. This irked Holms especially; and at last his growing misanthropy drove him to the roof of our block. Warmed by a bottle or two, and secure in his natural genius for climbing, he used to leap out of a window on the top floor on to a steeply-sloping roof, above a

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sixty foot drop. How he managed to stick on to the roof I cannot explain. Once, when he had returned to our room and gone to bed, an officer on the top floor came down to tell me that Holms had dropped his wrist-watch into the gutter of the roof. With this officer's assistance, I lowered myself out of the window and retrieved the watch. It was an anxious job, and deepened my wonder at Holms, who used to lie on the roof for an hour or so at night, lamenting the constitution of the universe. Subalterns passing up and down the passage would from time to time lean out of the window and listen in perplexity to—"Oh, God, God! Here am I with my marvellous brains and marvellous physique . . . and yet . . . oh, WHY?"

In the third week of October this retreat was closed to Holms by the authorities. Captain von Tecklenborg and the sergeant-major came into our room after supper, and asked me to accompany them to the top-floor. Holms, they told me, was somewhere on the roof,

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and would I be so good as to speak to him? I called out his name, and from behind some distant chimney-pots came a plaintive "Hughie, they want to shoot me!" Looking down into the square, I saw the guard, four or five of them, their rifles pointed upwards. I explained to Captain von Tecklenborg that Holms was not meditating escape. He wished simply to be alone. The guard, on Captain von Tecklenborg's instructions, lowered their rifles, and Holms, after some persuasion, emerged from behind the chimney-pots, his confidence in the universe still further impaired.

As the weeks and months passed, everyone in varying degrees felt a sinking of energy, and a growing distaste for his surroundings. We played hockey in the square for three weeks or so, then dropped it. A tennis court was rigged up, but was naturally reserved only for good players. There were a few debates, and lectures were given, by Besly on Wagner, and by Gerard Hopkins on Spinoza, and on The Modern State. But apart from the theatre, and

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even that began to languish, nothing held the general interest for long.

The gloss of freshness and interest was rubbed off the inmates of one's own room more quickly and completely than off outsiders. In my own experience, one particular person would get on my nerves for perhaps three or four days, and during this period would sum up in himself everything that was exasperating me. Then he would re-emerge as a human being, and someone else would take his place. The fact that one was oneself serving the same symbolic purpose for others chastened and sobered the expression of one's irritability.

On August 2nd a new officer joined us, a Mark Tapley of real life, who practised cheerfulness as a duty, usually whistled, and sometimes sang. He was a good sort, unselfish and helpful, but I often wished that Charles Dickens were with us.

The alcove off the billiard room was a refuge where one could read or write in quiet. Alec Waugh was usually to be found there. Though already nine-

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ALEC WAUGH AND MILTON HAYES

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teen, he had, owing to the interruption of the war, only published two books at this date; *The Loom of Youth* in 1917, and *Resentment: Poems* shortly before his capture in March. He was now engaged on a novel, *The Conscript*, which was to send war to join the public schools in the lumber-room of mankind's discarded whims. Unfortunately, when Alec returned to England, the market for that kind of book had not yet come into existence.

Another work which he had in hand at this time was a monologue in the Garden of Gethsemane. This he submitted in turn to Gerard Hopkins, to Holms, and to me. We advised him against completing it.

In our many strolls round the square, Alec, over eight years my junior, used to affect a deceptive deference, which for some time persuaded me that he was impressed by my opinions on books and on life in general. I could not, for instance, altogether agree with him about Rupert Brooke and Compton Mackenzie; and his dissent from my

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criticisms was uttered in so mild a tone that I did not expect to hear them repeated. Yet, at the close of our captivity, the same high whisper uttered exactly the same sentiments as in our first talk: "You must admit that Compton Mackenzie's prose is as beautiful as Keats," and "After all, Rupert Brooke wrote *Mamua* . . . you can't get away from that."

Towards the close of October, Besly left our room for a smaller one, where he could work with more ease. About a fortnight later, Roussell took Besly's place. In the first months of his captivity, Roussell occupied a room in Block I, overlooking a road. Father Duggan, a Catholic priest, had invited him and another captain, an Irishman called Cahill, to this room, the only spot in the camp from which an escape was really practicable. Cahill and Roussell decided to postpone an attempt at escape till Father Duggan should be repatriated, as the German officer in charge of Block I had sent them to Father Duggan's room,

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in response to the priest's request. But one day, two colonels, Ogilvie and Moore, came into this room, and said that they proposed to effect an escape from it. Roussell and Cahill replied that they too were proposing to escape, but did not think it fair to make the attempt till Father Duggan had left Mainz. This objection was overruled by the colonels; and Roussell and Cahill then withdrew it on condition that they should accompany Ogilvie and Moore.

With a saw in a pocket-knife lent them by Amcoats, a chaplain, Roussell and the others cut out two boards in the flooring. There was sand underneath, which they removed daily in small quantities, putting it in the ash-bin. In the cellar thus formed they stored provisions for the escape. Whenever one of them went to the *Ausgabe*, he would pick up a tin and hold it against the light, thus distracting the German's attention while he slipped another tin into his pocket. In due course, provisions for two months were stored in the cellar.

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Clothes were the next problem. Through their Irish orderly, Finlan, and assisted by an English tailor in the camp, they bought orderlies' trousers, from which they removed the stripes sewn down the seam of the leg, and dark-blue cardigans which they reversed to look like sailors' jerseys. Cahill made a coat out of a blanket, and another coat was bought in Mainz by Finlan, who was allowed about the town. The tailor converted the linings of their coats into pockets where they could carry their provisions. Tweed caps and rücksacks were also procured in Mainz.

There was no German money in the camp, only tokens. This difficulty was solved by Finlan, who spent some weeks selling soap in Mainz at ten marks (half a sovereign) a cake. "Ah, glory be to God!" he said to Roussell, holding up a cake of soap. "Many's the home I could wreck for the like of that."

Major Bruce, another officer engaged in trying to solve the problem of escape, lent Roussell a map. This map Roussell copied, and cut the copy into squares,

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which he stuck on to handkerchiefs soaked in dripping to make them waterproof.

A compass as well as the map was provided by Bruce. Bruce had made a key to the German sergeant-major's desk, in Block I, out of a canteen spoon, and used to deposit the compass each evening in this desk for security.

Finally, the rabbit-wire of the window was detached and put back, and a rope of blankets made. The drop to the ground was fifty-three feet.

In addition to these preparations, they had acquired from a disabled colonel, who was in charge of all escaping attempts, a number of important facts to bear in mind if they managed to get away; for example, to avoid all villages down the Rhine, as each village had its watch-dogs; not to procure bicycles, as no one but government servants rode them; to look out for wooden sleepers, a sign that they had crossed the Dutch frontier, and so forth.

Escape was impossible on ordinary nights, as a sentry was on guard below

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the window. They had to wait for a thunderstorm to drive the sentry into his box.

On the night of the first attempt, Colonel Ogilvie lowered himself from the window, carrying nothing, in case he should be caught; his boots rubbed with onions to put hounds off the scent, gloves on his hands, and a khaki handkerchief over his face.

When he was half-way down the rope came undone, but Ogilvie, a good athlete, managed to climb back.

The rope was mended, and a second attempt made some weeks later, in August on another night of storm. Ogilvie got to the bottom, and Williams, the third colonel in the party, was about to follow, when a flash of lightning revealed Ogilvie to the sentry. The alarm was raised, and Ogilvie was taken to the guard-room.

Williams returned to his room, and Roussell and Cahill, slipping pyjamas over their mufti, got into bed. The orderly officer entered a few minutes later. Stepping over the escaping kit on the floor, he went to the window. There was nothing

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much of interest there, but, on looking round, he saw the rope attached to Cahill's bed. Cahill was awakened, and ordered to get out and stand up, but the orderly officer did not detect that he was wearing anything under his pyjamas. On being pressed for information, Cahill said that Colonel Ogilvie had come into the room with a rope and said he was going out of the window. That was all he knew. What Colonel Ogilvie did was no affair of his.

The orderly officer retired, after posting a sentry outside the room. The next morning, Finlan carried all the escaping kit and provisions past the sentry, in a wash basket.

Many other attempts were made, including an ingenious one in daylight by Colonel Moore, while the attention of the sentries was distracted by a sham fight. But this attempt of Roussell, Cahill, and the three colonels was the only one in which anyone actually got outside the camp.

Roussell was turned out of his room, and eventually ended up in ours, a few

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days before the Armistice. Sated with one another, we were all delighted to have him with us. My memory of him during his fortnight in our room is of a Father Damien radiating kindness among a group of disgruntled lepers.

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CHAPTER VIII

"HIP-HIP-HIP-HIP HURRAH FOR HONOLULU!"

AT the beginning of October the theatre, like everything else, was languishing. Four companies had dredged the camp for beauties, and one would have said that neither a new star nor a big theatrical hit could any longer be hoped for.

Suddenly emerging from his seclusion of five months, Milton Hayes, in two weeks or so, improvised a revue which though not in itself equal to The Girl on the Stairs, had for its leading ladies, if there can be more than one, two hitherto undetected geniuses, who proved incomparably the best feminine impersonators among our subalterns. One, an officer with a Dutch name, gave a

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heart-sick tea-shop waitress, in a song by Milton Hayes, with a verisimilitude no actress could have beaten. I still remember his rendering of:

"Those glinting eyes,
The kind that mesmerize,
You get girls in your power,
And you stuff 'em up with lies . . ."

Each verse ended with a half-mocking, half-reproachful, "Oh, my, you are a one!"; but in the last verse she broke down, and, with a rending sob, drew her elbow across her eyes and ran off, crying, "Oh, my, you are a one!"

The other leading lady, Anderson, at the close of the revue, came down a plank into the middle of the audience, a barbaric queen, swaying her braceleted arms to the agonised applause of five hundred compulsory celibates.

One field officer, of mature years, with greying hair, was so overwrought that after the show he tracked the barbarian enchantress, into a corner of the camp,

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less secluded than in his frenzy he imagined, and gasped out "Don't call me major! Call me Jim!"

Some of our chaplains found Milton Hayes' revue demoralising. There was, for instance, a character who came forward and proclaimed: "I am the spirit of Eastern Love." A disquieting touch.

The chaplains sent for Milton Hayes, and remonstrated with him. "Would you," one of them asked, "care to take your mother to such a piece?"

"Nothing the old lady would enjoy more," said Hayes.

"It is obvious," the parson replied, "that we move in very different spheres."

A meeting, attended by most of the camp, was convened to debate whether the revue should be staged again. Gerard Hopkins spoke on behalf of Milton Hayes, urging the freedom of the Elizabethan stage, and Shakespeare's Rabelaisian pleasantries. His audience looked at each other and nodded, as if to say: "We must safeguard the Shakespearean

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tradition. No slur must be cast on Rabelais."

The other side of the question was put by several chaplains, including a Catholic padre, whose white face glowed with the intensity of his rage. "What of that creature who calls itself 'the spirit of Eastern Love'?" he cried. "We want no Asiatic corruption here, no filthy Oriental lasciviousness."

The audience looked at each and nodded, as if to say: "We are Englishmen. This baleful exoticism will do us no good."

When the revue was put on again, there were a few additions. A bout of back-chat between two of the characters was closed by one of them with: "Spheres to you"; and every now and then Milton Hayes would cry: "Stop that line! There may be something smutty in it. We must refer it to the parsons."

Meanwhile, the war was beginning to crack up. On October 6th, Germany proposed an armistice, but not on terms acceptable to the Allies. On October

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26th, Ludendorff resigned his command. During these days the *Frankfurter Zeitung* published leaders of an eloquence as impassioned as Cicero's, and more sincere. Especially fine was their attack on Ludendorff, as the author of Germany's ruin, the embodiment of the Prussian's blind insensate thirst for military domination. They published, also, an appeal to the young German poets to console the Fatherland in the hour of its agony. One can hardly imagine such an appeal, which testified to the good side of German simplicity, in an English newspaper, in any crisis of England's destiny.

During this month we heard that a protest meeting had been held in Mainz, against the Government's propaganda on behalf of the submarine campaign. Mainz station had on more than one occasion been blocked by our parcels; and the inhabitants wished to know how the authorities reconciled these enormous consignments of food with their statement that the submarines were starving England out. One of the causes which

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probably hastened the German surrender was the capture of so many thousands of Englishmen in the March offensive, and the consequent flooding of the country with parcels from England. That our parcels were hardly ever tampered with is a high tribute to the order and discipline of the half-starving Germans.

Towards the close of October, the grippe, or Spanish influenza, entered the camp. There were four or five deaths, a low proportion, as hardly anyone escaped the grippe, and the camp doctor, except in a few cases which were transferred to a Mainz hospital, did nothing but hurry from room to room, cast a glance at each patient, and murmur, "Tea and aspirin."

I was the first in our room to go down with the grippe, which confined me to my bed from November 1st to November 6th. Lunn minor and Brown, though even they had lost some of their benevolence by this time, gave me my tea at intervals. The rest of the room, for Roussell did not arrive till the day I got

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up, were as indifferent to my high fever as I would later have been to theirs, had not my convalescence coincided with the collapse of nearly all the others, and therefore compelled me to wait on them. Melville and the Mark Tapley of our room troubled me especially during my illness. There was a camp diversion called, I think, satin-tarso, its implements a chisel and hammer, with which designs were carved on wooden boxes. Melville had recently taken up this amusement, and would hammer away for hours, indifferent to my curses, as I tossed on a mattress of coagulated wood shavings, my head resting on a leather jerkin stuffed with underwear; not much of a pillow, but preferable to the one supplied by the authorities.

Mark Tapley was worse even than Melville. He had affixed a war-map to the door, studded with pins to mark our position and the Germans'. Each morning, when the bulletin published by the *Frankfurter Zeitung* arrived, Mark Tapley, laughing and singing, took out all the pins, moved them east-

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wards, and knocked them in again. A German stand, or Mark Tapley's death, how I prayed for one or other of these boons!

There were several air-raids about this time, though Frankfurt was the main objective, and we generally came in only for a few bombs dropped by the 'planes on their way back. One night the bombs fell near enough to shake the whole building. Immense enthusiasm was expressed by some members of the room. I remember Percival applauding each explosion. Hodges, too, seemed anxious to die a Samson death in the ruins of his enemy's house.

Though only in the twenties, Hodges wore a look of perennial age. Dried-up, somewhat arid in appearance was Hodges, and sharply irascible at times, but with a core of virtue. Fanatically anti-German, he resented my lukewarm attitude. At the time of the German collapse, I was discussing with Holms the possibility that the Kaiser might try to escape into Holland, and the risks of such an attempt.

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"He'll get away all right," Hodges broke in, "if he disguises himself as a blackguard."

"But if he disguises himself as a gentleman," I enquired, "I suppose he'll be recognised at once?"

"Of course! No. I mean—— Oh, I've no time to waste chopping words with you literary gentlemen. The man's an infernal rascal. That's plain English, and good enough for me."

Hodges' habit of saying the opposite of what he meant naturally lessened the force of what he said. When I upset a basin, during his bout of Spanish influenza, he cried from his bunk, "Damn you, Lunn! You've put ten years on my life."

On November 9th, Mainz was taken over by the revolutionaries. This event was marked for us by the arrival of Canteen Charles in mufti. The German officer, a cavalier in peace, a tiger in war, was apparently an unobtrusive citizen during a revolution.

Strolling round the square that morning ing, I stopped for a talk with an elderly

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sentry on the other side of the barbed-wire netting. "It seems," I said, tentatively, "as if the war is nearing its end."

"Ja! Ja!" he laughed. "*Deutschland caput! Deutschland caput!*"

His laugh over, he explained the situation to me as he saw it. Germany's one aim now was to please President Wilson and the *Entente*. How glad the good President would be when he heard that the Germans were no longer militaristic! He would raise the blockade at once. There would be butter and sugar again, oh, dear God! and tea and soap and white bread! and no more army, no more discipline, no more rich and poor! And all nations at peace and friendly. A new world, a new world!

The camp heard of the Armistice without excitement. Most of us were either ill or convalescent. Tinned food, confinement, and the grippe had subdued everyone except a handful of die-hards, who wished to take vengeance on

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the general, the late commandant, now superseded in that position by the sergeant-major of our block. Our senior colonel, a mild man, compelled to be the spokesman of fiercer spirits, assembled us on several occasions to hear the ultimatums he was issuing through the present commandant to his predecessor. The general was, if I remember rightly, to be torn limb from limb if he set foot within the citadel again.

For a day or two, round about the Armistice, the Germans assured us that revolution was breaking out in the armies of the *Entente*, that soldiers' councils were being formed, that the terms of the Armistice would be cancelled by the English and French socialists, now about to take over the government of their respective countries, and, finally, that the English fleet was sailing up the Kiel Canal under the red flag, to fraternise with their German comrades.

These rumours were discredited before November 17th, on which day we were allowed to go about the town, and to

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wander over the old ramparts of the citadel. From these ramparts a number of us used to throw tea, sugar and biscuits to a crowd of children, between the ages of seven and fifteen or sixteen. They stood, densely packed, gazing up at us, ready to rush for whatever was dropped; and if we ceased for more than a minute to throw anything they lifted a thin inhuman wail, which rose and fell until we began again.

The prospect of release worked a great change in Holms. In the three weeks or so which followed the closing of the roof to him, he had sunk into a stupor of melancholy, and used to sit for hours without a word, by the stove. His dreams tormented him. For forty-five nights in succession, he told me, he had had the same dream, of a horse he was riding turning his head round to bite him in the leg. But as soon as we were allowed to walk in the town, his stupor vanished, he got out his best tunic, made a round of the Mainz cafés, and when we left Mainz in a Rhine steamer two days later, was seen off

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by a girl, whose longing piteous gaze as the steamer drew away profoundly affected him on her behalf.

One afternoon, in our last week, as I was sitting on a bench in the square, looking at the Taunus range, I heard from the theatre a chorus of voices roaring out the refrain of a farewell song:

> "And soon we'll leave these marble halls
> To Canteen Charles and Tickle——
> Hip-hip-hip-hip-hurrah for Honolulu!"

On Armistice night I had thought of the guns silent at last after so many years; but this refrain, mingling with my convalescent pleasure in the faint sun shining on Mainz Cathedral and the Taunus hills, stirred more deeply the sense of something finished for ever, and something new about to begin; not that it was in itself a memorable requiem, but the vigour put into it, so rare at that time in the camp, imprinted it on my mind, tired by illness and my long captivity.

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On Tuesday, November 19th, about two hundred of us left for Holland on a Rhine steamer, the *Prins Hendrik*. Four of the six nights of the journey to the Dutch frontier, I passed on board, sleeping on the floor of the saloon, my head resting on a pillow lent me by the good-hearted eccentric who had founded the Chatham League. The first night, the *Prins Hendrik* lay off the quay at Bingen. In the early morning, Holms and I were strolling about on the quay, when a train, packed with soldiers returning from the front, some even lying on the roofs, drew up on the line, a stone's throw away. They stared at us gloomily, without a sound, and presently the train moved on again. We saw many more of these trains during the voyage between Bingen and Cologne.

Our journey was so leisurely, the *Prins Hendrik* being a cargo steamer which loaded and unloaded at every port of any size, that we were able to visit all the big towns on the Rhine: Coblenz, Bonn, Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Wesel.

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During my captivity I had sometimes dreamed I was in Dresden again, walking about the streets in my uniform, and nervous of being detected. But now, the sight of our uniforms moved little interest, except when some of us were accosted and asked if we had any tea or sugar for sale.

On board the *Prins Hendrik* I fell into talk with an amiable German, who attributed the defeat of Germany to the German's simple, too little sophisticated nature. "We are very solid," he said, "very enduring. We have the best soldiers in the world. But our diplomats! That is where you English are so superb. Ah, God, what finesse, what adroitness you have shown! And we, what thick-fingered imbecility!"

He touched on other topics, Germany's unpreparedness for war, the Russian atrocities in East Prussia, the violation of international law by the English and French bombing of undefended areas, the illegality of the blockade, and so forth. Very courteous and deprecatory,

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he realised how awkward it was for me to belong to a side which had behaved so badly, and made it clear that he attached no blame to me individually.

At Cologne, where the boat stayed two nights, I spent the first night at the Excelsior Hotel, with Holms, Melville and Wheeler. There I enjoyed my first lie-down bath for two years, and a soft bed with white sheets. Holms was in increasingly good form, bounding about like a panther, especially when Hodges was in the neighbourhood. Hodges, hardly over the grippe, spent the voyage glaring at Germany with sick, reddened eyes. "Sewage—good enough to drown Boches in," was his reply when Holms craved a kind word for the Rhine.

My second evening in Cologne, I went to the opera, Verdi's *Othello*. Some of our officers got into trouble that night, being forced to rise hurriedly from their beds and defend themselves and their partners from a sudden attack of German soldiers, armed

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with broken bottles and animated by patriotic rage against their country-women.

The streets of Cologne, on the morning of our departure, were decorated with arches in honour of an army, the third, I think, which was expected to arrive that afternoon. Placards with "*Willkommen, tapfere Krieger!* (Welcome, brave soldiers!)" were affixed to the arches; and certainly no soldiers in history better deserved such a welcome than those who, during the past year, had resisted the combined forces of France, England, and the United States.

"Who's won this damned war?" Hodges growled, scowling at these placards.

"You have, Hodges! You! You!" cried Holms, and gave a mighty leap.

"B–r–r–r–r!" from Hodges.

The only expression of resentment I myself encountered during these days was in a crowded lift at the Excelsior. A German officer entered after me, glanced at my uniform, and muttered,

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"Quite an international gathering, apparently."

My last night in Germany was spent ashore, at Wesel. The next day, November 25th, we disembarked at Nimuegen and crossed the frontier into Holland. Crowds cheered us as we marched to the station, where we entrained for Rotterdam. At Rotterdam we went on board the *Porto*, and the next morning started for England The steamer picked its way, for two days, between the floating mines in the North Sea, while we crammed ourselves with white bread and fresh meat, Milton Hayes setting up fresh records in food consumption. On the morning of Thursday, November 27th, we sailed into the Humber, greeted by the sirens of torpedo-boat destroyers, and anchored for twenty-four hours. The following morning we were taken to Hull on a tug. Before we disembarked, the General Officer Commanding the Humber defences, standing on the quayside, communicated to us through a megaphone the admiration which our King and Country felt for our

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heroism, and their profound sympathy for the sufferings we had so bravely borne. We inferred that we were not to be placed under close arrest, pending a court-martial inquiry into the circumstances of our capture. This was a relief, and when, a day or two later, we were given coupons on which to record our vote for or against Lloyd George, nothing was to be heard but, "Dam' good fellow, Lloyd George. He'll have my vote all right."

It was a grey depressing day. Roussell, Holms, and I, after lunch in Hull, walked to the station, to take train for Ripon, the reception camp in the north of England for repatriated prisoners-of-war.

"You find correct kit a bit of a trial after the last two years?" Roussell asked me, with a side-glance, as we walked along.

"Don't I look like a member of the military caste of a victorious nation?"

"Actually, no."

In the train, we read the *Daily Mail*, which contained such items as: "Our

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Prisoners. Huns promise better treatment"; "Beatty's order. Snub for Hun Admiral"; "Criminal Germany. Bloodthirsty literature!" It appeared that Lloyd George was wobbling, and the *Daily Mail* put some straight questions to him:

"Is Germany to pay up?"

"Are all the Huns to be sent out and kept out?"

"Is the Kaiser to be surrendered?"

"Mr. Lloyd George's declarations," the *Daily Mail* wrote, "fall short of the precise and unmistakable definiteness that the country demands. Our jurists, he says, agree that the Kaiser was guilty of an indictable offence for which he *ought to be held responsible*. Germany. he says, is to pay 'up to her capacity.' It is not for us to question her capacity, There was never a question of Germany's capacity to make the war. There should be no question from our side of her capacity to pay for it. The Premier says to the Huns who came here and spied on us and undermined us, 'Never again.' Why not say explicitly, 'All here

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'must go, and none must come in?' On all these points there must be no shadow of excuse for a suspicion that the Government has cause for tenderness to the Hun. . . ."

About France, the *Daily Mail* wrote: "President Poincaré's stirring declaration at the great banquet to the King in Paris, 'We are united for ever,' marks the consummation of the alliance between Great Britain and France."

"Good God!" Holms muttered, as he laid the *Daily Mail* down. "One forgets. . . . But the *imbecility!*"

"I see," I said, "that if I write my memoirs of captivity, I shall have to call the book 'Held by the Hun.' Of course, I shall reserve the right to reissue it, say, in ten or perhaps fifteen years, under the title of 'An Englishman visits the Fatherland.'"

Holms groaned again.

"Cheer up!" said Roussell. "After all, we're back in dear old Blighty again, and though it's nearly half-past two we

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can still read the paper without artificial light."

"Honolulu!" murmured Holms, looking out at the sodden fields and bleak sky. "Honolulu!"

THE END

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APPENDIX

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PROUT THE PERFIDIOUS

First production April 14th, 1917, Karlsruhe.

WOFFLES

First production December 15th, 1917, Karlsruhe.

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PROUT THE PERFIDIOUS

Scene. Study of Marcus Prout.

Marcus [*pacing restlessly up and down*]. I like it not! I like it not! Patagonia declares war on us—the newspaper urchins cry the tidings as I speak. [*Noise without*—"Pagonyerclareswore! Pagonyerclareswore!] Ha! Curse the brats! How then can the Patagonian Dairy Produce Company cash my cheques? Bah! T'were folly even to dream of it. But what then of the house of Prout? Must it fall? Perish the thought! [*Enter* JAMES *the butler*].

James. [*Announcing* GRAYSON]. The six hundred and sixty sixth applicant for the post of valet. [*Exit* JAMES].

M. Prout. Six, six, six! Why, the Beast in Revelations! Well, why not—as long as he's clean about the house. [*Enter* GRAYSON].

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Marcus. Play bridge?

Grayson. Yes, sir!

Marcus. A Mahometan?

Grayson. No, Sir!

Marcus. Drive a motorbus?

Grayson. Yes, Sir!

Marcus. Wear false teeth?

Grayson. No, Sir!

Marcus. Engaged!

Grayson. Very good, Sir!

Marcus. Go! [*Exit* GRAYSON].

[MARCUS *catches sight of a letter lying on the table*]. A letter! How came it there? There's treachery afoot! [*Rings a bell violently—Enter* GRAYSON. PROUT *seizes him by the throat*]. Villain! How came this letter here?

Grayson. I did not place it there! I intended no harm!

Marcus. Tut! Tut! Tut! Idle prevarication. You, you my trusted servant, deliberately laid it there—And there it lies! Can you deny it? There it deliberately lies. Yes, Grayson, a deliberate lie, and I trusted you. Oh! [*seizing him by the throat*] Some men would sweep flues with a thing like

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you—Thank your stars [*he rushes* GRAYSON *to the door*] that I am cast in a more generous mould. [*Kicks him out: he picks up the letter and opens it*]. Ha! What do I read? My uncle Jeroboam —and he comes here to-night . . . my wealthy uncle! Ah! [*Walks up and down thoughtfully. Enter* MRS. PROUT]. My little Sarah! Uncle Jeroboam will be here for dinner.

Sarah Prout. Oh! I daresay! But will dinner be here for him?

Marcus. How! What mean you, wench?

Sarah. What do I mean? I mean half a tin of mackerel, my ration of bread, mustard, salt, and a French biscuit which I was saving for breakfast.

Marcus. Lordly fare for a Prout to set before his kindred!

Sarah. It isn't *my* fault, Marcus. What with prices so high and money so scarce.

Marcus. T'is like to be scarcer—hark! [*Cries without*—"Pagonyerclareswore! Pagonyerclareswore!] Patagonia has declared war, and we are ruined!

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Sarah. Ruined! Oh, my poor children!

Marcus. *Your* poor children! This is news to me!

Sarah. I mean, the children we mean to have, Marcus.

Marcus. Ha! [*Seizes her by the throat*]. Let me look in your eyes! [*Glares at her intently*]. 'Tis well—but beware how you traffic with the honour of a Prout.

Sarah. Your suspicion wrongs me, husband, it wrongs me cruelly.

Marcus. A truce to idle babble! My uncle will be here at any moment. [GRAYSON *enters and conceals himself at the back*].

Sarah. Will he stay the night, dear?

Marcus. He will.

Sarah. And will he be leaving to-morrow, dear?

Marcus. [*Raising from the floor an enormous jar, labelled* POISON, *and placing it on the table*]. I think not.

Sarah. Oh, Marcus, you aren't going to poison poor Uncle Jerrie, are you?

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Marcus. Prate not! My decision is fixed—'Tis better thus! Better for me —I shall be rich: better for him— 'twill cure his gout for ever—Ha! But quick! [*He pours berries from a jar, and hands his wife a coffee grinder*]. Poison berries! Taste like coffee! Grind them. Quick! [SARAH *proceeds to grind the berries, weeping.* JAMES *the footman enters*].

James. Mr. Jeroboam Prout! [*Enter* MR. JEROBOAM PROUT, *a benevolent, portly old gentleman*].

J. Prout. My children, how good it is to see you once more!

Marcus. Ever welcome, dear uncle! Were but your visits longer!

J. Prout. But my little Sarah looks pale. She does not greet her uncle with the merry smile of yore.

Marcus. Ah, uncle! Ever thoughtful for others. But you are weary yourself. Sarah, prepare the coffee.

J. Prout. [*Reclining in an easy chair*]. Children, 'tis but to-day I drew up a new will. [*Enter* JAMES *with boiling water*].

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Marcus. Hush! Not before the servants! [*Exit* JAMES].

J. Prout. [*With a deep resentful sigh*]. Ah!—a new will, leaving you my all. Nay, thank me not. I have none but you to love. My son—but he is no son of mine. I know not where he is, nor would own him did I know——

Marcus. What! So good a father have so base a son! I can scarce credit it.

J. Prout. Judge for yourself—this lad whom I deemed innocent as the new-born babe, whom I had shielded from all contact with the wickedness of this wicked, wicked world—but no! It is too horrible. I cannot sully your wife's ears.

Marcus. Continue, uncle. It will ease your heart. Sarah is no bashful maiden.

J. Prout. He was but eighteen summers, too—no, no, I cannot speak of it.

Marcus. Nay, tell us. We would fain share your grief.

J. Prout. An old, old story! A pretty housemaid, a rash boy, an elderly sharp-eyed housekeeper. She poured

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suspicion in my ear. At first I was indignant. For long I refused to believe. At last, to free myself from this intolerable suspense, I consented to play the spy.

Oh, that sight! Will it never cease to haunt me. . . . My boy, my Willie —his pyjamas thrown carelessly over a chair—his chest-protector on the night-table. [*He breaks down*].

Marcus. Courage, uncle, courage!

J. Prout. Next day he left my house for ever. Last March I became a grandfather. Twins, Marcus, twins! I gave the wretched woman an adequate allowance, and bade her never darken my threshold again.

Marcus. A piteous story! Sarah, pour out the coffee.

Sarah. [*Trembling*]. After dinner, darling, after dinner.

J. Prout. [*Playfully*]. 'Twill be cold by then. My little Sarah [*patting her cheek*] is still more the bride than the housekeeper.

Marcus. [*Pouring out a cup*]. Here, dear uncle. T'is a good brew.

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[J. PROUT *takes the cup and raises it to his lips.* GRAYSON, *carrying a couple of babies under one arm, rushes from his hiding-place, and knocks the cup from* J. PROUT'S *hands*].

Grayson. Poison, Father, poison!

J. Prout. Willie! my long-lost son!

Sarah. Willie! my husband! and my babies, my pretty babies!

J. Prout. What! Sarah! You, Molly, the housemaid—my rain breels!

Grayson. Yes, Molly, whom you so cruelly misjudged, my wife, my lawful wife, united, in the false belief that I was dead, to Marcus Prout, your would-be murderer!

[M. PROUT *rushes to the coffee jug, before* GRAYSON, *incapacitated by cramp in the right calf, can dash it to the ground*].

Marcus Prout. [*Having drained the jug*].

Foiled, Willie, foiled! Deem not, thou paltry thing,
That Marcus Prout was ever born to swing.
You've baulked me—true, and I am sorry—very—

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That I have failed to poison Uncle
Jerry.
But what is life? One day an empty
belly,
The next an overdose of shrimps in
jelly.
[*Turning to* WILLIE].
I leave you Sarah—Ha! revenge is
sweet!
The twins will make your misery
complete.
My eyes grow dim. I stagger all about.
Undignified, *but dauntless*, exit Prout.
[*Dies*].

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WOFFLES

Scene. A morning room in a country house.

[*Enter* JACK VANE, *a young man of* 28].

Jack Vane. [*Looking round*]. Not here either! But he's hanging round Evelyn somewhere, I'll bet—Damn the fellow! Woffles! What a name! Who is he? Where does he come from? Who are his people? A common adventurer—I know the stamp—who pushes himself into decent society on the strength of being an obliging umpire, and a pretty smart long stop—Damn the man! [*Enter* EVELYN HART—*a young girl*].

Evelyn. Oh, it's you, Jack.

Jack. Disappointed, eh? Shock to see the fellow you happen to be engaged to, isn't it?

Evelyn. Don't be so silly! I'm looking for Aunt Muriel.

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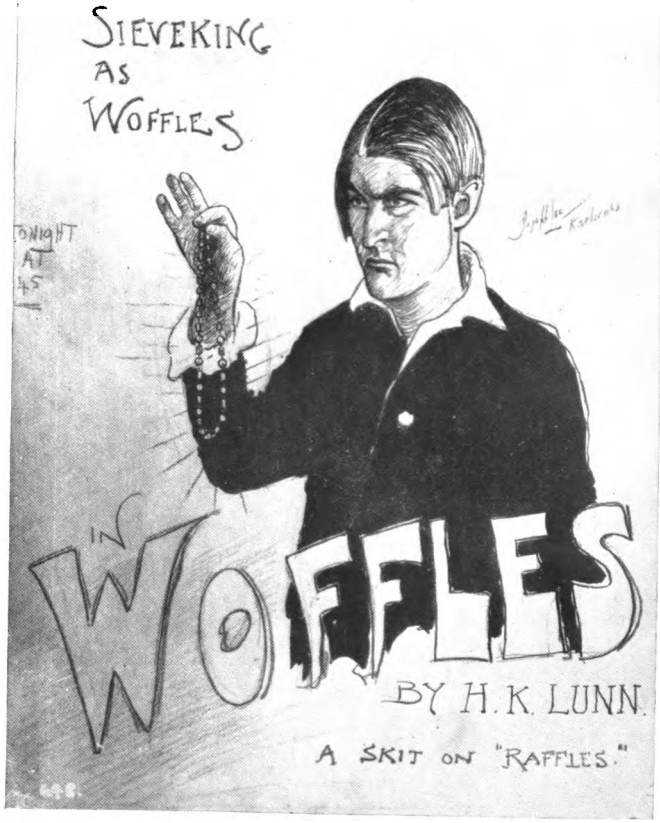

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Jack. Rot!

Evelyn. How *dare* you talk to me like that? You're hateful, perfectly hateful.

Jack. You wouldn't be so sick, if there wasn't something in it.

Evelyn. I don't know what you mean.

[*Enter* WOFFLES, *who takes out his cigarette case, and lights a cigarette, with nonchalant deliberation*].

Jack. [*Gripping her arms*]. You *do* know what I mean, you know perfectly well: you were looking for that fellow Woffles; you're always with him; everyone's talking about it; nice for me, isn't it?

Evelyn. Let me go! How dare you——

Jack. It would be bad enough if he was someone whom people knew, but who is he? One of these pros. who masquerade as gentlemen, and live by cadging invitations——

Woffles. [*Advancing and holding out his cigarette case*]. Have a Tropillo,* Vane?

Jack. What? Hullo!

Woffles. Have a Tropillo, Vane?

Jack. N-n-no thanks.

* The brand sold at the canteen.

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Woffles. Have a Tropillo, Vane?

Jack. No, I won't. I'm not going to!

Woffles. [*Laying a hand on* JACK'S *shoulder and fixing him with his eye*]. Have a Tropillo, Vane?

Jack. [*Feebly*]. Righto! [*Takes a cigarette*].

Woffles. Don't let me detain you, Vane.

Jack. That's all right, I'm not going.

Woffles. Don't let me detain you, Vane.

Jack. I shan't budge.

Woffles. Don't let me detain you, Vane——

Jack. Oh, all right. [*Exit*].

Woffles. [*Lightly*]. I've come to say good-bye. Miss Hart. I'm leaving for town in half an hour.

Evelyn. You're going away? In half an hour?

Woffles. I came down here for a particular reason; there was something I meant to do; well, now I can't do it. Don't ask me to explain. [*Passionately seizing both her hands*]. Good-bye! [*He turns to go*].

Evelyn. Mr. Woffles. [*Faintly*]. I don't understand——

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Woffles. Miss Hart, you heard what your fiancé said about me——

Evelyn. A mean, spiteful lie!

Woffles. But supposing it were true!

Evelyn. It isn't—I know it isn't!

Woffles. I only wish it were!

Evelyn. You only wish it were! Oh, *what* do you mean?

Woffles. I mean that Mr. Vane's portrait flattered me—flattered me outrageously. You don't know my life, Miss Hart—I hope to God you never will. I've stuck at nothing [*seizes her wrists*] nothing! But now! Well, for once in my life, it doesn't matter how or why, I've pulled up short. [*In a whimsical, wistful tone*]. Anthony Woffles pulls up short! [*With a bitter laugh*]. Ye Gods! Anthony Woffles!

Evelyn. [*Laying her hand on his arm*]. Mr. Woffles, why have you pulled up short?

Woffles. Don't! Don't ask me!

Evelyn. Is it because of me?

Woffles. Evelyn! Miss Hart! No! No! Good-bye!

Evelyn. Anthony, I love you. Stay!

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Woffles. You don't know what you're saying. For God's sake don't tempt me!

Evelyn. I love you, and you love me. What does anything else matter?

Woffles. Evelyn, you force me to tell you what I am. I'm a thief, Evelyn, a common thief.

Evelyn. I don't care! I love you!

Woffles. I pinch silver spoons.

Evelyn. They are a needless extravagance.

Woffles. I break into children's money boxes.

Evelyn. They encourage hoarding.

Woffles. I threaten old women, and make them hand over their purses.

Evelyn. It would be madness to threaten prizefighters.

Woffles. I came here to steal your aunt's necklace.

Evelyn. I will help you.

Woffles. You mustn't.

Evelyn. I will.

Woffles. You can't.

Evelyn. I can.

[*Enter hastily* CHARLES MAYBANK, *familiarly known as* FIDO].

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Fido. Woffles! [*Catches sight of* MISS HART]. Oh! Sorry! I thought Mr. Woffles was alone!

Evelyn. I'm just going——

Woffles. Really, my dear Fido, I envy your tact.

Evelyn. Mr. Woffles, don't tease Mr. Maybank! I really must go. [*Exit.*]

Woffles. [*Freezingly*]. Admirable partner in guilt you make! I congratulate you on your sang-froid. Your air of well-bred nonchalance is quite inimitable.

Fido. Woffles, you break my heart with your bitter sarcasm. But this once I will force you to admit that I am not quite the howling idiot you are pleased to consider me.

[*Lowering his voice*]. Woffles, Samuel Pott, the cricket pro——

Woffles. Is our old friend Detective Macphairson of Scotland Yarrrd, in one of his least effective disguises——

Fido. What! You knew it! You've known it all this time, and you never told me! Woffles, what have I done to deserve this lack of confidence?

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Woffles. My dear Fido, your almost imbecile expression of honesty is one of our greatest assets. I was hoping you wouldn't recognise Macphairson, though it beats me how even you took so long about it.

Fido. But how on earth did you spot him?

Woffles. My excellent Fido, have you ever watched Macphairson bowling googlies at the nets. They are the funniest things on this funny little globe, except, of course, the yorkers which you serve up disguised as long hops.

By the way, the footman who poured the pêche Melba down Lady Muriel's back last night is one of Macphairson's most promising pupils—David Grumby by name.

[*Enter* LADY MURIEL GORE, *a portly dame of about* 50, *and* EVELYN HART].

Woffles. What a charming necklace, Lady Muriel. I wish it was mine.

Lady M. Now, Mr. Woffles, you know that tone of yours is quite irresistible.

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But I'm not going to part with my necklace, even to please you.

Woffles. [*With a laugh*]. Then I shall have to steal it!

Lady M. Really, Mr. Woffles, I believe you're quite capable of it.

Woffles. I hope so.

Fido. Woffles, how *can* you talk like that?

Woffles. My admirable Fido, of course I'd like to be equal to the feat of abstracting such a carefully guarded possession, and I'd admire the fellow who could do it, though, of course, the moral side of me would condemn him.

Fido. Oh, I see.

Evelyn. [*Giving a little cry*]. Oh!

Lady M. Darling, what is it? Are you ill?

Evelyn. It's nothing, auntie—just a sudden little pain—Oh! [*She puts her arms round her aunt's neck and undoes the necklace, which she slips into her blouse.* WOFFLES *and* FIDO *both move towards her.* FIDO *notices her abstracting the necklace and seizes hold of her*].

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Fido. Oh, you would, would you? That's your little game. A female nark, are you?

[*Enter at a rush* DETECTIVE MACPHAIRSON *and* DAVID GRUMBY].

Macphairson. Hands up, the pair o' ye! Grumby, search yon gent! [*Pointing at* FIDO]. Eh, Mr. Woffles, I've had ma ee on ye these mony days——

Woffles. [*Coldly*]. I'm afraid this is some silly practical joke, Lady Muriel. Pott, I don't know who's put you up to this, but I advise you to clear out if you value your job, for which, by the way, you are quite unfitted——

Macphairson. Cricket's no my job, and it's no yours, either, ma bonny burglar.

Lady M. [*Putting her hand to her neck*]. My necklace! It's gone!

Macphairson. It has that, mam, and yin of these gents has it.

Woffles. As a matter of fact, Lady Muriel, your necklace is at present inside Miss Hart's blouse. [WOFFLES *strolls across to* EVELYN]. You've won your bet, Miss Hart— produce the booty. [MISS HART *pulls the necklace out*—WOFFLES

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picks it up, substituting a paste imitation for the original which he slips into his pocket].

I'm awfully sorry, Lady Muriel. [*Handing her the imitation necklace*]. I bet your niece she couldn't abstract your necklace without being spotted—Do forgive me?

Macphairson. It's a lee, a black lee, isn't it, Miss?

Evelyn. How dare you call Mr. Woffles a liar? Auntie, do forgive me—It was fearful cheek, but I just couldn't resist the sport of the thing.

Lady Muriel. [*With dignity*]. The whole affair is, shall I say, a little unusual. Mr. Woffles, you are a privileged person, and you certainly make the most of your privileges.

[*To* MACPHAIRSON *and* GRUMBY].

You two persons need not remain. You have made a sufficient exhibition of yourselves for one afternoon. [*Exit* MACPHAIRSON *and* GRUMBY]. Evelyn, go and dress for dinner at once—if you have *quite* recovered. [*Exit* LADY MURIEL *and* EVELYN].

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Woffles. Upon my word, Fido, I admire your treatment of our confederate, Miss Hart.

Fido. Confederate! Miss Hart! Woffles, Woffles, why will you never trust me. How was *I* to know that she was working with us—I thought she was playing her own hand.

Woffles. I'm only pulling your leg, Fido. You did splendidly, my boy. That little scuffle of yours forced friend Macphairson's hand, and a pretty hash he made of it, too. The laugh's on the south side of the Tweed this time, my boy.

Fido. I don't know about that. We've offended Lady Muriel, and not a penny the richer for it.

Woffles. Fido, don't you know your Woffles yet? Lady Muriel is at this moment wearing the best imitation necklace that money could procure. I hate to be mean. I also dislike being out of pocket over these little transactions. [*Drawing the pearl necklace from his pocket and holding it up*]. This should balance matters, with a

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little over to the credit side of Anthony Woffles.

Fido. Splendid, old man, splendid! [*They turn to go out*].

Woffles. [*Producing his cigarette case*]. Have a Tropillo, Fido——

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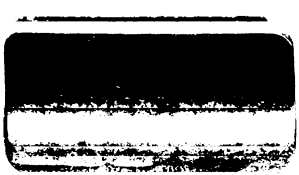

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